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VENOM

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INKERS: **NELSON DECASTRO** (#18-20) WITH **RICK KETCHUM** (#20) AND **TERRY PALLOT**, **CHRIS SOTOMAYOR** & **KARL KESEL** (#21)
COLORIST: **CHRIS SOTOMAYOR**
LETTERERS: **VC's CLAYTON COWLES** (#18-19) & **JOE CARAMAGNA** (#20-21)
COVER ART: **TONY MOORE** & **JOHN RAUCH** (#18), **TONY MORE** & **EDGAR DELGADO** (#19 & #21) AND **MICHAEL DEL MUNDO** (#20)

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COLORISTS: **ROB SCHWAGER** (#13.1) & **SANA TAKEDA** (#13.2)
LETTERERS: **VC's CLAYTON COWLES** (#13.1) & **CORY PETIT** (#13.2)
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LETTERER: **VC's JOE CARAMAGNA**
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COVER ART: **TONY MOORE** & **VAL STAPLES**

VENOM

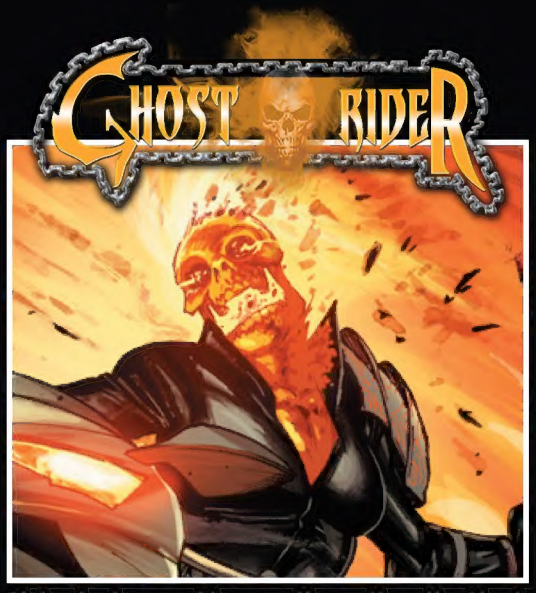
CIRCLE OF FOUR

FOUR WAYS TO DIE.
ONLY ONE CHANCE TO SURVIVE.

Eugene "Flash" Thompson was a soldier, until he lost his legs in combat. Now he's the host of the Venom symbiote, a parasitic alien that grants powers similar to Spider-Man. As Venom, Flash became a black-ops special operative for the Army. But the struggle against the symbiote and his alcoholism took a heavy toll on him. Flash deserted the Army and is on the run...

General Thunderbolt Ross, after years of attempting to destroy the Hulk, was himself transformed into a behemoth of rage: The Red Hulk! A military man for life, Ross has been tasked to bring in the renegade Flash Thompson and secure the Venom symbiote.

Laura Kinney, the teenage clone of Wolverine, has been trying to track down a sample of her blood, stolen from her some time ago. Fearing that her genetic material could be used to create other living weapons like herself, she's tracked the buyer to Las Vegas.

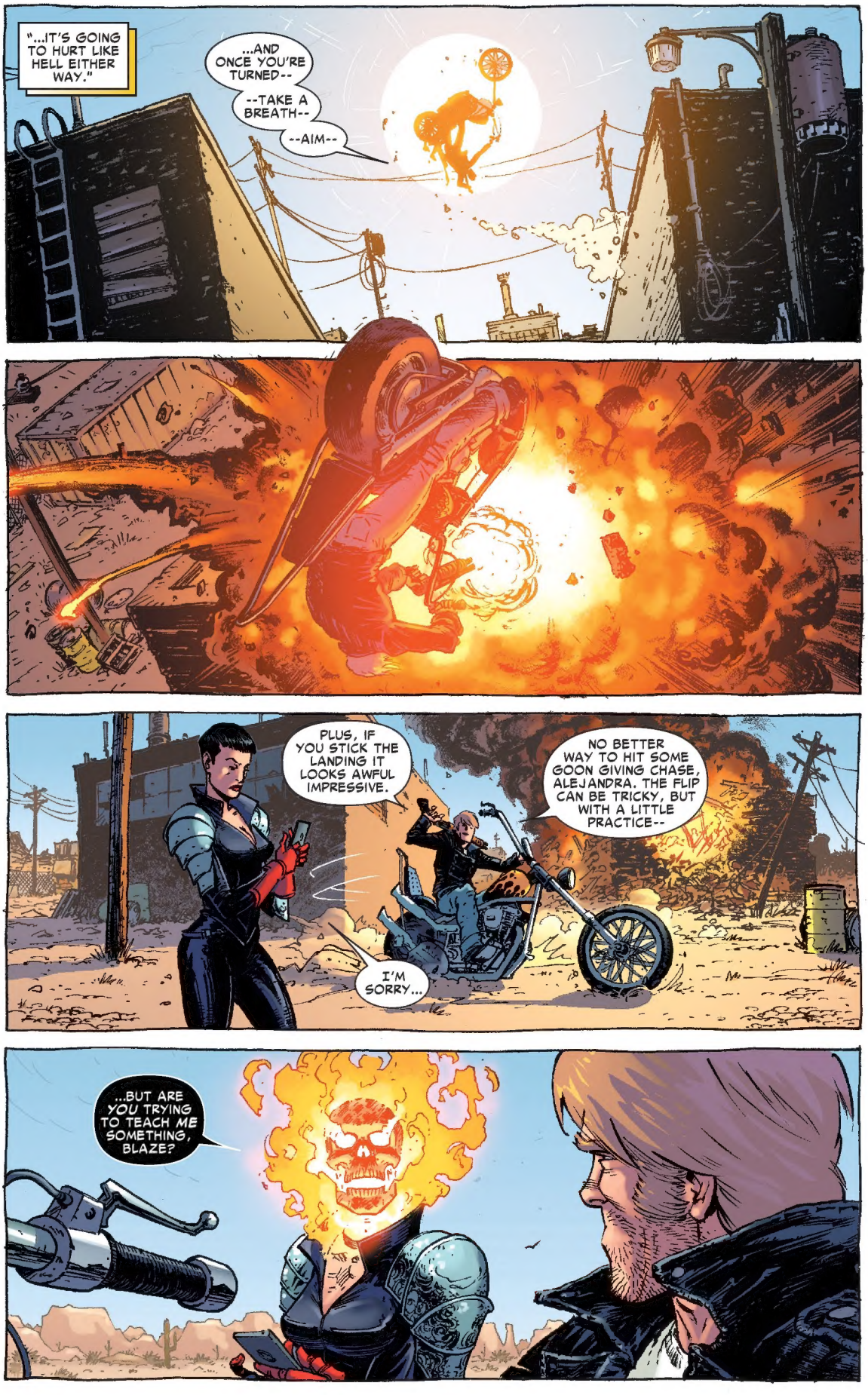


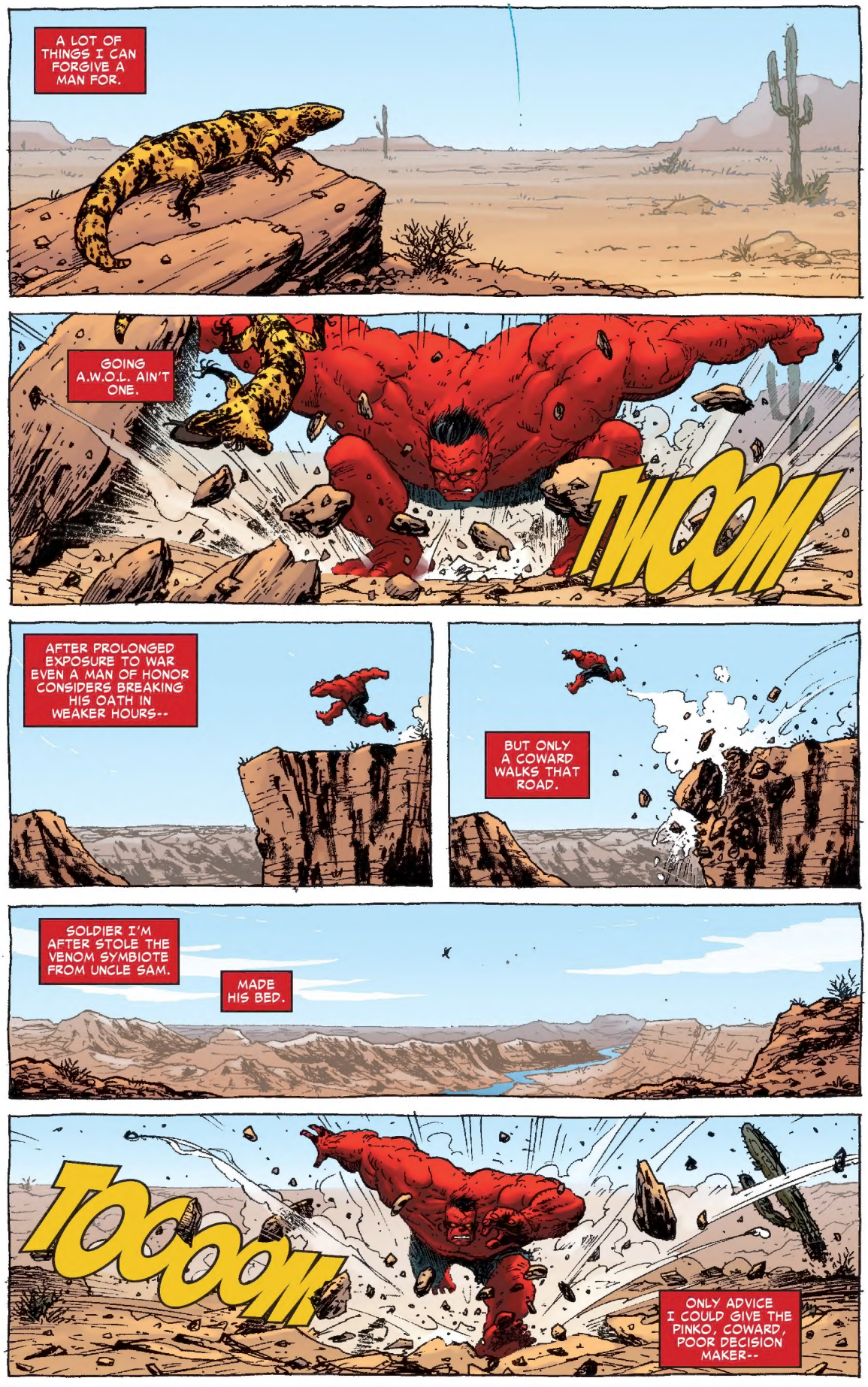
Alejandra is cursed to roam the earth as the Ghost Rider, a brutal Spirit existing only to mete out vengeance on the wicked. She's currently traveling with Johnny Blaze, the previous Ghost Rider. Though she is brash and quick to anger, Johnny hopes he can teach Alejandra how to control her powers before she becomes a danger to herself...and the whole world.

Las Vegas.
I'M NOT LOOKING FOR A FIGHT, BETTY.
I TOLD YOU--STOP CALLING.
ONLY GAVE MOM MY ROOM NUMBER IN CASE OF EMERGENCY.
I'LL TAKE CARE OF HER. I'LL BE BACK SOON AND I'LL MAKE SURE--
WHEN I'M READY. NO--LISTEN--STOP--
IT'S NOT YOUR BUSINESS ANYMORE, BETTY!
HOW CAN I GET THAT INTO YOUR HEAD?!
WE'RE THROUGH!
--LEAVE ME THE HELL ALONE!
TASHH
GOOD.
THAT SHOULD DO IT.
KEEP HER AWAY FROM US...FROM ME.
KEEP THEM ALL AWAY FROM ME...

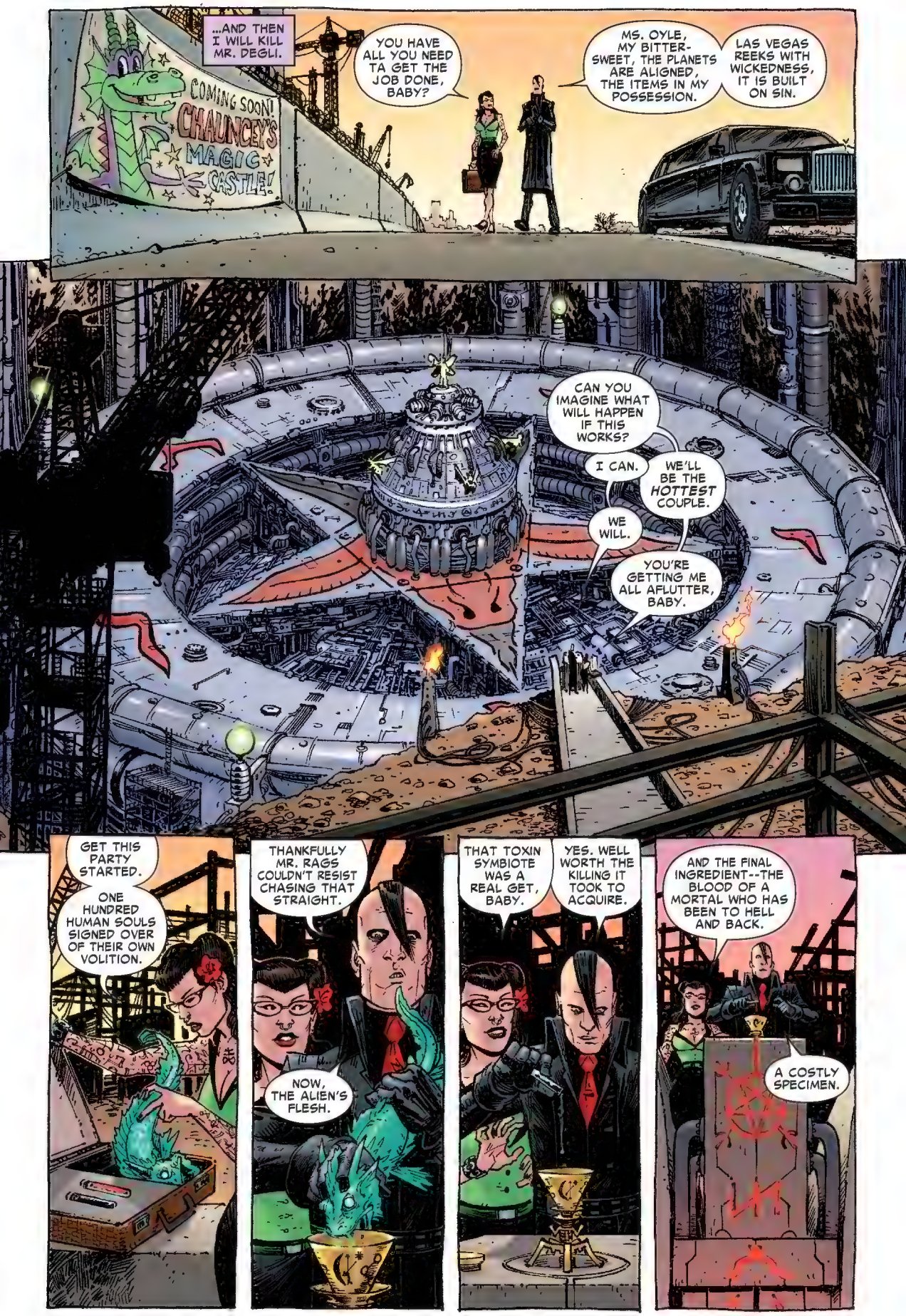
...ONLY WAY I CAN PROTECT THEM.
THE DEVIL'S DEN
HEY!
I'M GOOD FOR THE MONEY--I'M GOOD FOR IT ALL!
NO NEED FOR THE FREAK SHOW--I'LL GET YOU PAID!
MR. RAGS.
YOU OWE MY CASINO THIRTY-TWO THOUSAND DOLLARS.
I'VE CHECKED YOUR BANK ACCOUNTS.
YOU DON'T HAVE THE MONEY.
SO NOW THINGS GET WEIRD.
NO--WHAT ARE Y--!

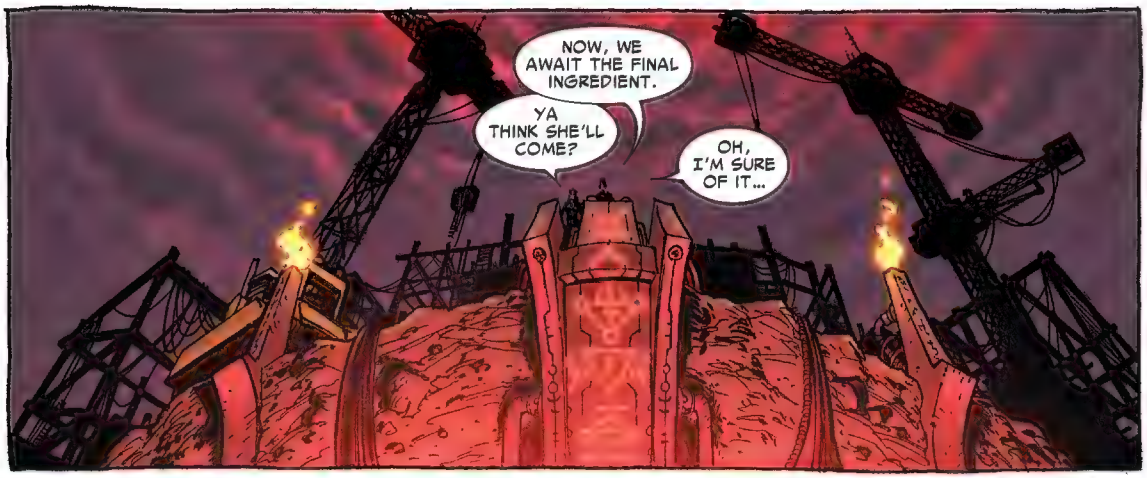
MR. DEGLI--LISTEN--JUST LISTEN! JUST EVERYBODY CALM DOWN, MAN!
DON'T NEED TO PULL THIS STRONG-ARM ROUTINE WITH ME--! I'M OLD-SCHOOL--I-I'VE BEEN AROUND!
YOU HAVE "BEEN AROUND," MR. GARY RAGS.
GAMBLED THE MONEY INTENDED FOR YOUR MOTHER'S CANCER TREATMENT.
LEFT YOUR WIFE AND SONS DESOLATE WITH NOTHING.
KILLED A BOOKIE IN RENO, TO AVOID A TWO THOUSAND DOLLAR DEBT.
TO BE HONEST, YOUR SOUL'S NOT WORTH MUCH.
BUT, I'M A FAIR MAN; I'LL ABSOLVE ALL DEBTS TO MY CASINO ONCE YOU SIGN THIS CONTRACT GIVING ME YOUR TARNISHED SOUL.
DONE.
OKAY? YOU GOT IT, MAN.
HEY?!
WHAT THE HELL, MAN?
WE HAD A DEAL!
KILKK
IT'S ALL IN THE SMALL PRINT, MR. RAGS.
NOW, I'M JUST GOING TO TAKE WHAT IS RIGHTFULLY MINE.
HOLD VERY STILL.
OR SQUIRM...


"...IT'S GOING TO HURT LIKE HELL EITHER WAY."
...AND ONCE YOU'RE TURNED--
--TAKE A BREATH--
--AIM--
PLUS, IF YOU STICK THE LANDING IT LOOKS AWFUL IMPRESSIVE.
NO BETTER WAY TO HIT SOME GOON GIVING CHASE, ALEJANDRA. THE FLIP CAN BE TRICKY, BUT WITH A LITTLE PRACTICE--
I'M SORRY...
...BUT ARE *YOU* TRYING TO TEACH *ME* SOMETHING, BLAZE?


A LOT OF THINGS I CAN FORGIVE A MAN FOR.
GOING A.W.O.L. AIN'T ONE.
THOOM
AFTER PROLONGED EXPOSURE TO WAR EVEN A MAN OF HONOR CONSIDERS BREAKING HIS OATH IN WEAKER HOURS--
BUT ONLY A COWARD WALKS THAT ROAD.
SOLDIER I'M AFTER STOLE THE VENOM SYMBIOTE FROM UNCLE SAM.
MADE HIS BED.
TOOOOM
ONLY ADVICE I COULD GIVE THE PINKO, COWARD, POOR DECISION MAKER--

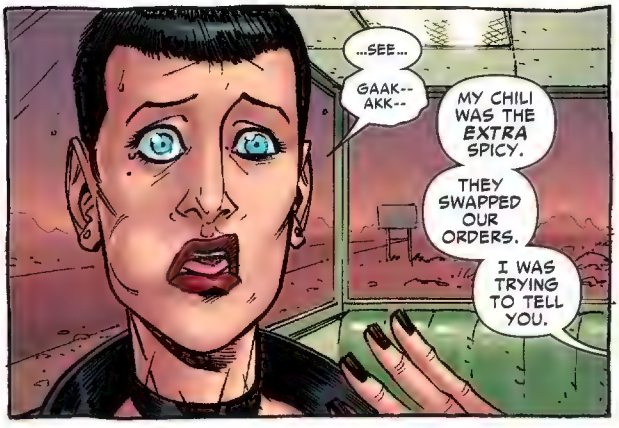
"...BETTER BE IN SHAPE FOR A FIGHT."
EVER SINCE I WAS CREATED AS X-23, THERE HAS *ALWAYS* BEEN SOMEONE TRYING TO EXPLOIT ME.
TRYING TO STEAL FROM ME.
STEAL MY DIGNITY.
MY OPTIMISM.
MY FAITH IN HUMANITY.
CALEB HAMMER TIME
AMERICAN EAGLE
HRRM.
MR. DEGLI, THE MAN WHO OWNS THIS CASINO, HAS TRIED TO STEAL SOMETHING *FAR* MORE DIFFICULT TO RECOVER...
...HE HAS TRIED TO STEAL MY SOUL.
HOW MUCH TO GET YOU TO COME UP TO MY SUITE FOR A "*NAP*," HONEY-PIE?
DO YOU FEEL THAT *VERY* SHARP THING IN YOUR BACK?
IF YOU TOUCH ANOTHER WOMAN LIKE THAT *EVER* AGAIN--
SNIKT!
--YOU WILL TAKE A NAP INTO ETERNITY.
MR. DEGLI PURCHASED A VIAL OF MY BLOOD.
MORE TAMPERING. MORE EXPLOITATION.
I AM GOING TO GET IT BACK...


...AND THEN I WILL KILL MR. DEGLI.
COMING SOON! CHAUNCEY'S MAGIC CASTLE!
YOU HAVE ALL YOU NEED TA GET THE JOB DONE, BABY?
MS. OYLE, MY BITTER-SWEET, THE PLANETS ARE ALIGNED, THE ITEMS IN MY POSSESSION.
LAS VEGAS REEKS WITH WICKEDNESS, IT IS BUILT ON SIN.
CAN YOU IMAGINE WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF THIS WORKS?
I CAN.
WE'LL BE THE HOTTEST COUPLE.
WE WILL.
YOU'RE GETTING ME ALL AFLUTTER, BABY.
GET THIS PARTY STARTED.
ONE HUNDRED HUMAN SOULS SIGNED OVER OF THEIR OWN VOLITION.
THANKFULLY MR. RAGS COULDN'T RESIST CHASING THAT STRAIGHT.
NOW, THE ALIEN'S FLESH.
THAT TOXIN SYMBIOTE WAS A REAL GET, BABY.
YES. WELL WORTH THE KILLING IT TOOK TO ACQUIRE.
AND THE FINAL INGREDIENT--THE BLOOD OF A MORTAL WHO HAS BEEN TO HELL AND BACK.
A COSTLY SPECIMEN.


NOW, WE AWAIT THE FINAL INGREDIENT.
YA THINK SHE'LL COME?
OH, I'M SURE OF IT...

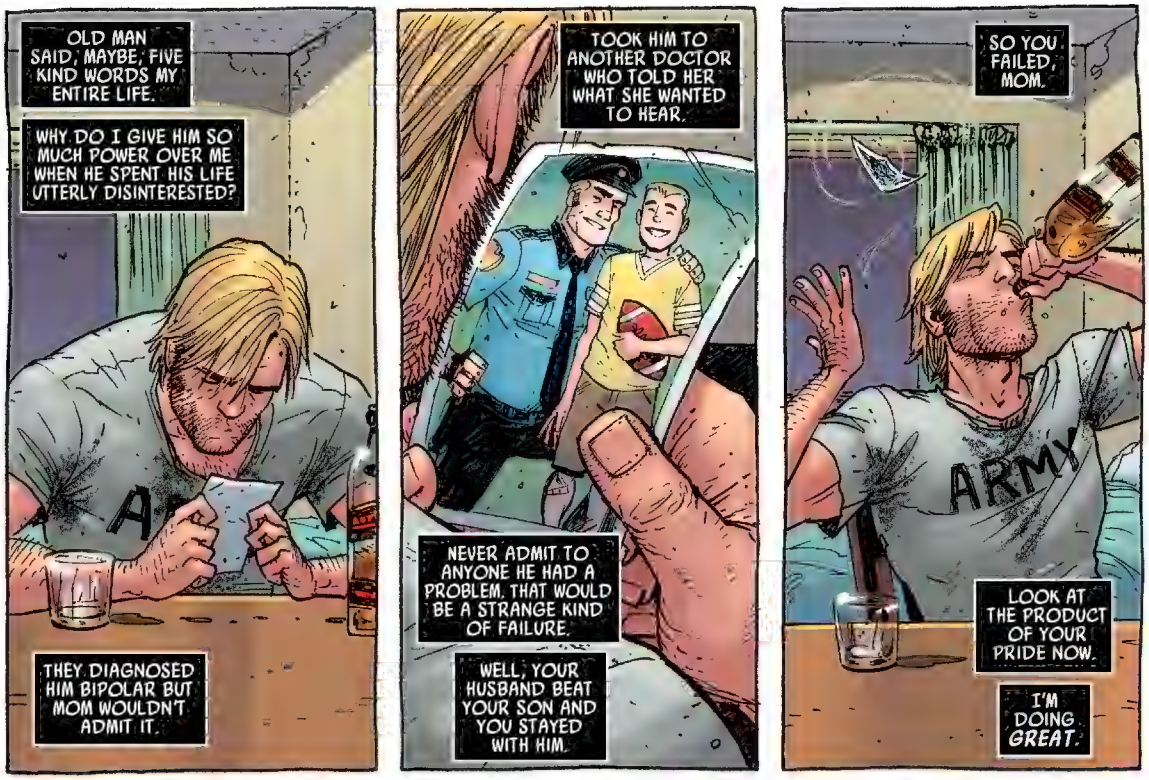
"...THE DEVIL COULDN'T KEEP HER AWAY."
WHY DO YOU ASSUME YOU KNOW SO MUCH MORE THAN I DO?
PIES!
ALEJANDRA, I WAS SIMPLY TRYING TO TELL YOU--

DON'T TELL ME ANYTHING.
MIDDLE-AGED BURN-OUT LOOKING FOR A DOE-EYED GIRL TO STUDIOUSLY ABSORB ALL THE OH-SO-VERY IMPORTANT LESSONS YOU'VE LEARNED OVER THE YEARS.
I WAS JUST TRYIN' TO--
TRYING TO VALIDATE YOUR LIFE, OLD MAN...
I CAN...


...SEE...
GAAK--AKK--
MY CHILI WAS THE EXTRA SPICY.
THEY SWAPPED OUR ORDERS.
I WAS TRYING TO TELL YOU.

THIS HERE, IT'S IRONIC. YOU GET THAT, DONTCHA?
LISTEN, KID, I GET IT, I'M OLD.
MORE MOTORHEAD THAN MASTODON.

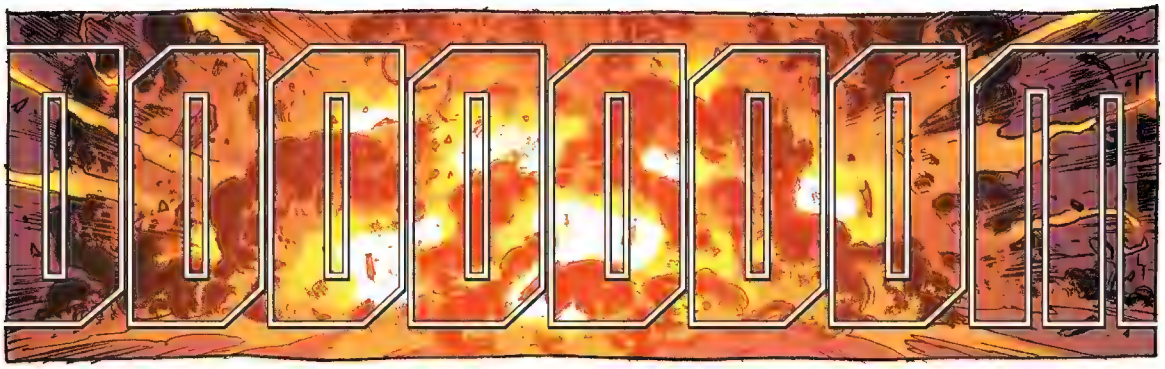
BUT YOU MIGHT CONSIDER--
SILENCE! DO YOU HEAR THEM?!
HUNDREDS OF CURSED SINFUL SOULS...
ZARATHOS MUST PERFORM HIS WORK--THE SPIRIT OF VENGEANCE IS THIRSTY FOR THE RETRIBUTION OF SINNERS.
HUNDREDS OF SOULS CRYING?
THAT'S BIG. TOO BIG. HIGH-LEVEL SATANIC BIG.
YOU'RE NOT READY TO INVESTIGATE SOMETHING LIKE THIS, DARLIN'.
I AM GHOST RIDER, BLAZE.
BUT YOU'RE NEW. LAST THING YOU NEED IS TO BE LURED IN BY DEVIL VOODOO.
BEEN THERE. TRUST ME.
LET ME CALL A FRIEND TO INVESTIGATE.
PRAY YOU'RE RIGHT.
HELLO? DAIMON? NO...WHERE IS HE?
I'M AN OLD FRIEND WHO DOESN'T LIKE TO GIVE MY NAME OUT TO MAGIC USER TYPES.
BAGS WAS HERE
YEAH-- ALL RIGHT BUT IF YOU SEE HIM CAN YOU GIVE HIM A MESSAGE...
"...THERE'S DEVIL TROUBLE BREWIN' OUT WEST."


OLD MAN SAID, MAYBE, FIVE KIND WORDS MY ENTIRE LIFE.
WHY DO I GIVE HIM SO MUCH POWER OVER ME WHEN HE SPENT HIS LIFE UTTERLY DISINTERESTED?
THEY DIAGNOSED HIM BIPOLAR BUT MOM WOULDN'T ADMIT IT.
TOOK HIM TO ANOTHER DOCTOR WHO TOLD HER WHAT SHE WANTED TO HEAR.
NEVER ADMIT TO ANYONE HE HAD A PROBLEM. THAT WOULD BE A STRANGE KIND OF FAILURE.
WELL, YOUR HUSBAND BEAT YOUR SON AND YOU STAYED WITH HIM.
SO YOU FAILED, MOM.
ARMY
LOOK AT THE PRODUCT OF YOUR PRIDE NOW.
I'M DOING GREAT.

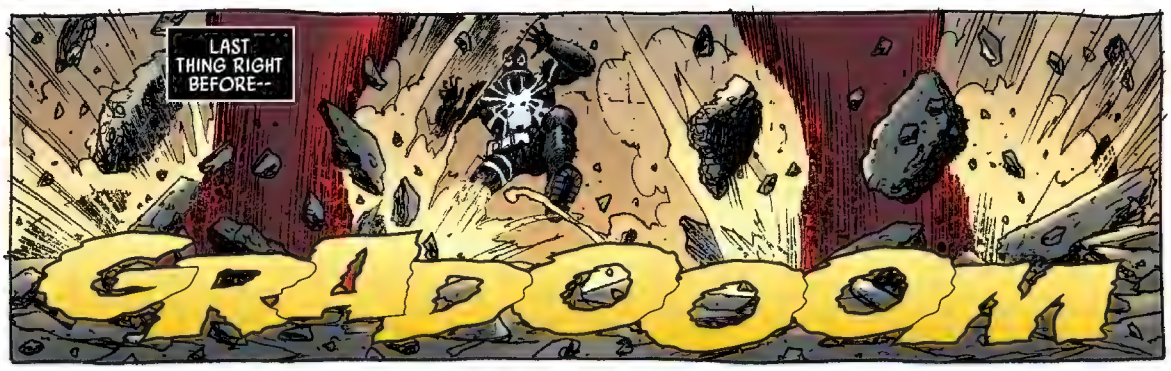
GRADOOOOM
HOUSEKEEPING.
JEEZ--!
ARMY

HAND OVER THE SYMBIOTE, THOMPSON.
I GOT A FANCY CONTAINER FOR IT, WE CAN MAKE THIS NICE AND EASY, GET YOU HOME IN TIME FOR COURT-MARTIAL IN ONE PIECE.
W-WHAT THE HELL--?!
THERE YOU ARE.
CAN'T HAVE YOU BONDING TO--
HEY!
GAA-- GET OF
WWE-- ARRE DONN'T WWANT THIS--!
ZAP
TACO PAGODA

AHH, SON OF A--
TACO TACO

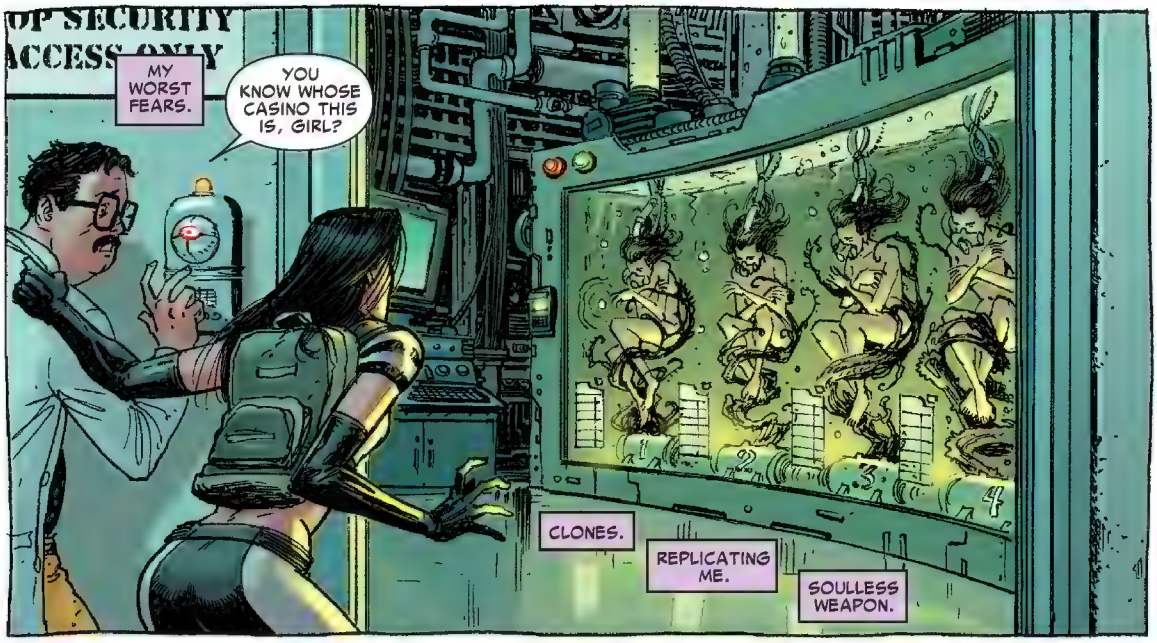

DOOOOOM

NO WAY AM I PREPARED FOR A HULK, RED, PURPLE, OR PAISLEY.
DRUNK--
SYMBIOTE CAN'T SOBER ME UP UNLESS I GIVE IT CONTROL--NO.
PRETTY GIRLS WITH BUTTS
LAST THING I DO.

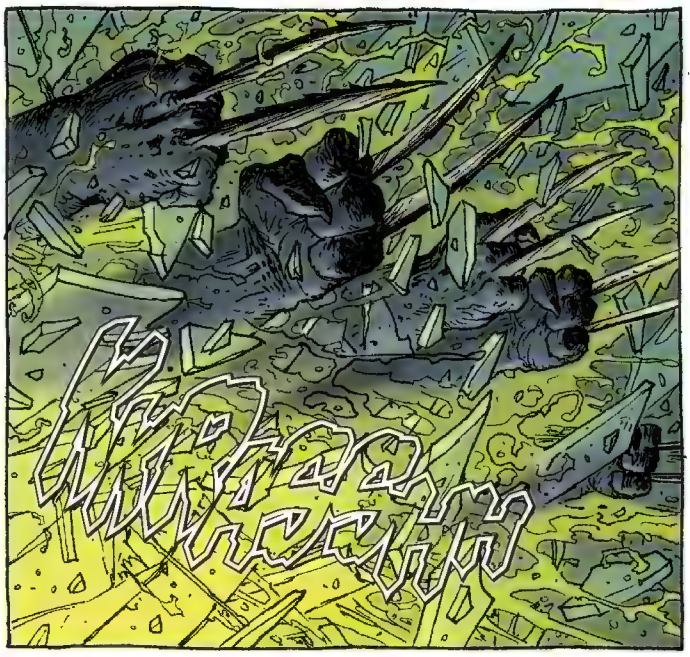

LAST THING RIGHT BEFORE--
GRADOOOOM

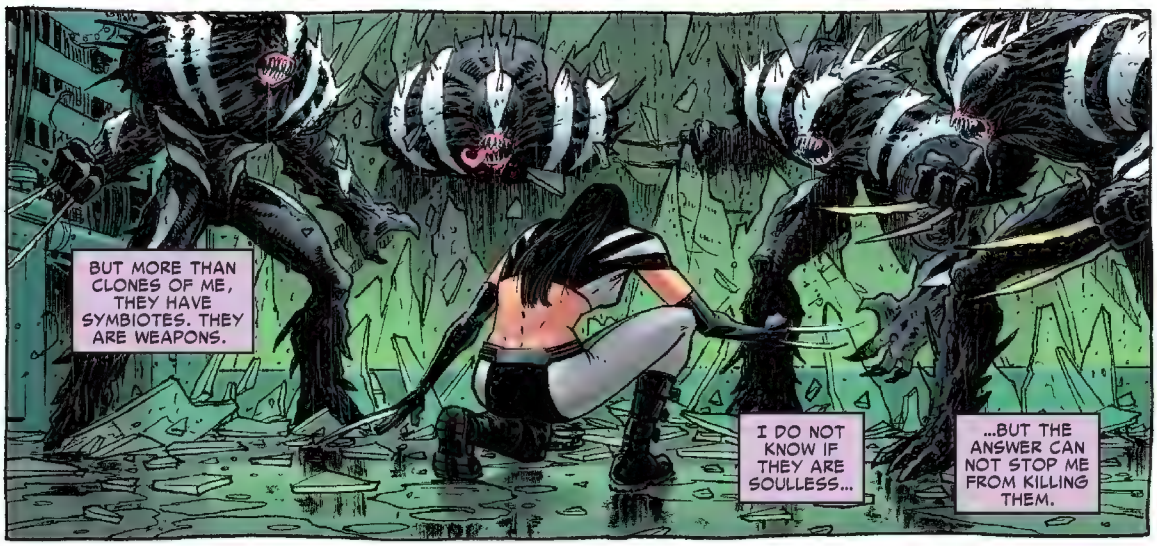
HULK SMASH.

I MUST SHAKE OFF THE FEELING OF VIOLATION.
SHAKE OFF THEIR INTERPRETATION OF WHAT I AM.
A WEAPON TO BE WIELDED, TO BE POINTED.
27
GENETIC TWIN IS A NOT-SO-CLEVER WAY OF SAYING "FAKE PERSON."
SOULLESS MONSTER.
THESE PEOPLE HAVE TAKEN MY BLOOD.
I DO NOT KNOW WHY.
BUT THEY CLEARLY DO NOT KNOW ME.
OPTEK
OPEN THIS ROOM.
SNIKT!

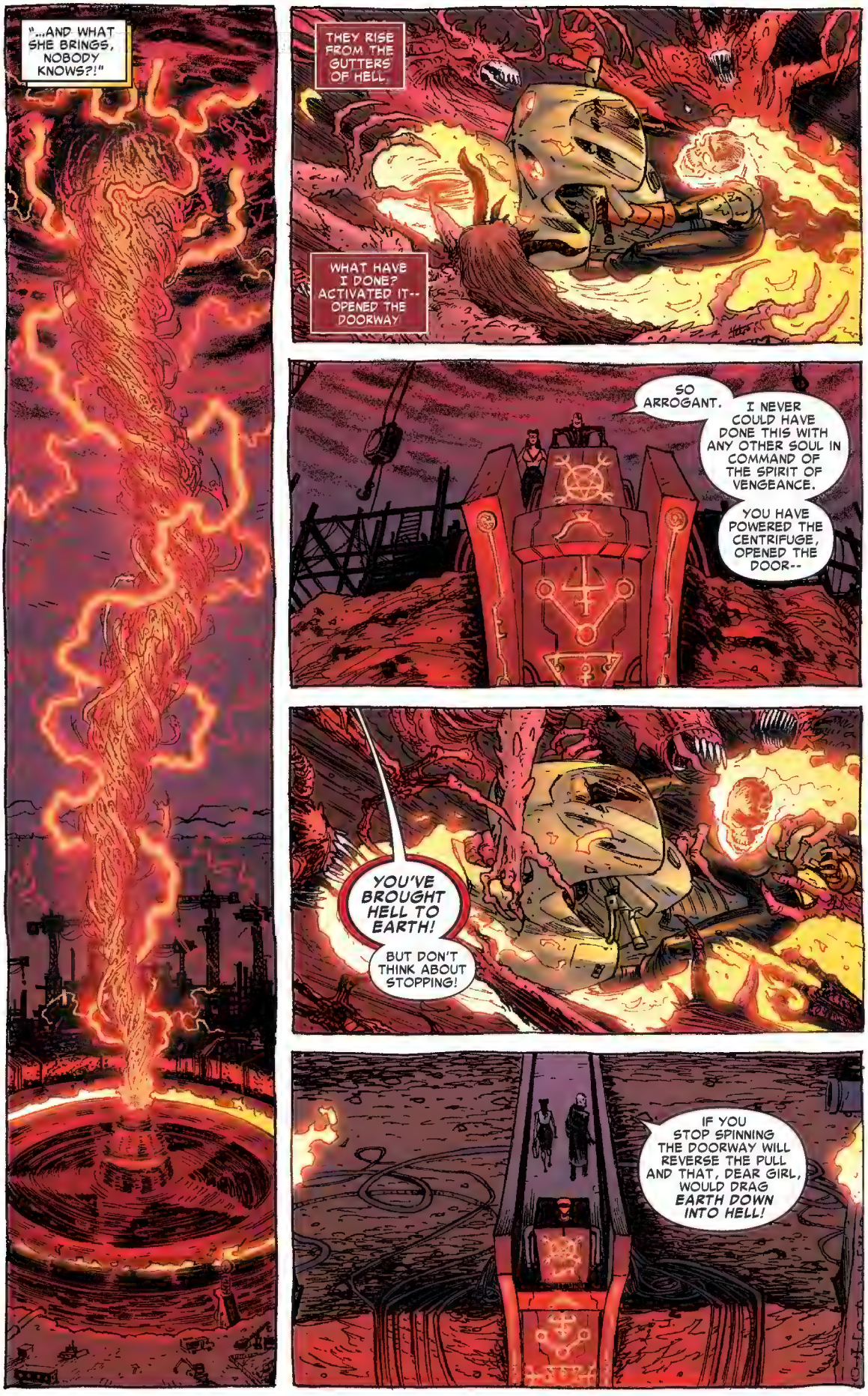

OP SECURITY
ACCESS ONLY
MY WORST FEARS.
YOU KNOW WHOSE CASINO THIS IS, GIRL?
CLONES.
REPLICATING ME.
SOULLESS WEAPON.

IT ISN'T UNTIL I PLANT THE C4 THAT IT OCCURS TO ME THAT THESE GIRLS HAVE AS MUCH RIGHT TO LIFE AS I DO.
IT COULD HAVE BEEN ME IN THEIR SITUATION.
YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHO YOU'RE--

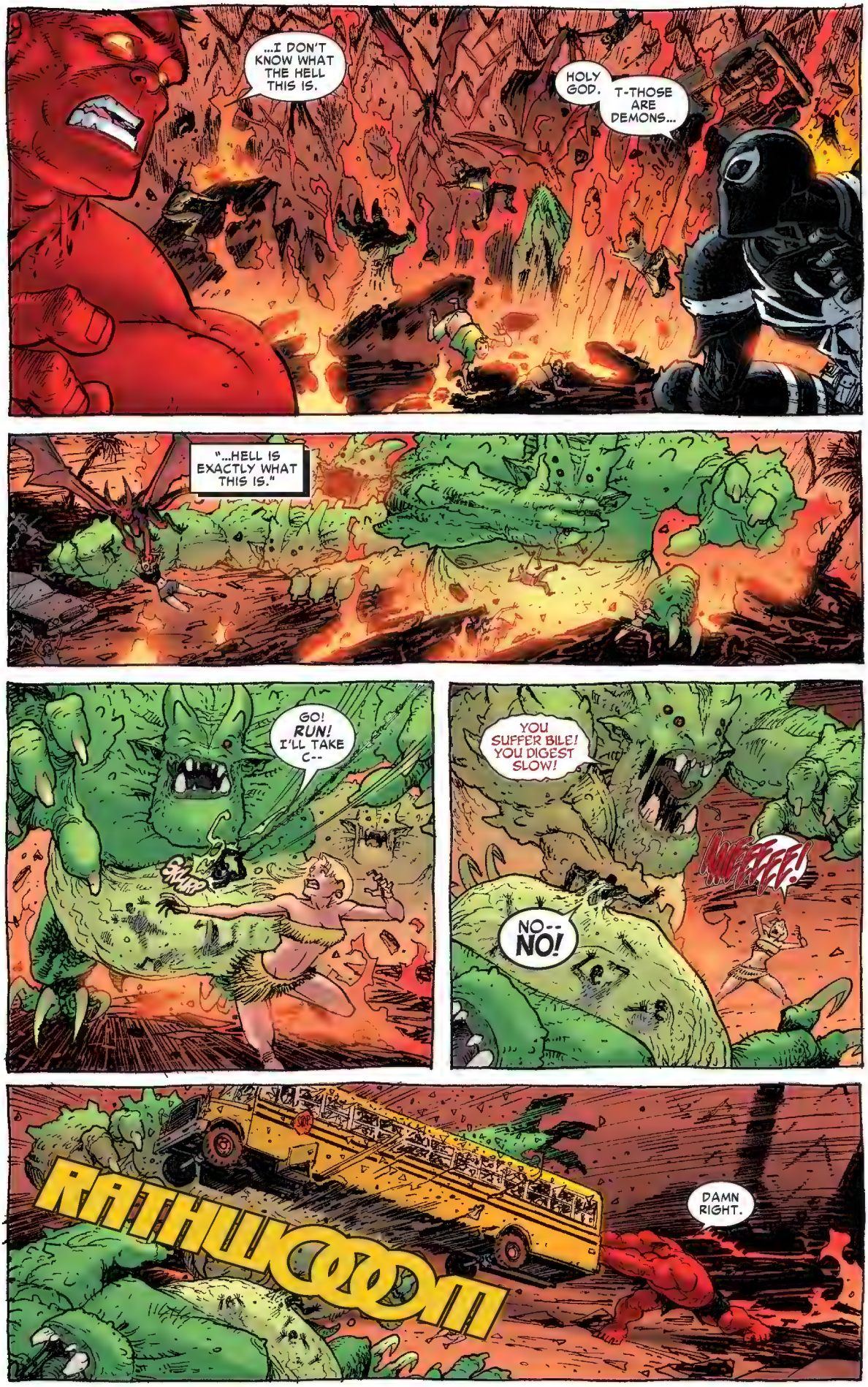



BUT MORE THAN CLONES OF ME, THEY HAVE SYMBIOTES. THEY ARE WEAPONS.
I DO NOT KNOW IF THEY ARE SOULLESS...
...BUT THE ANSWER CAN NOT STOP ME FROM KILLING THEM.

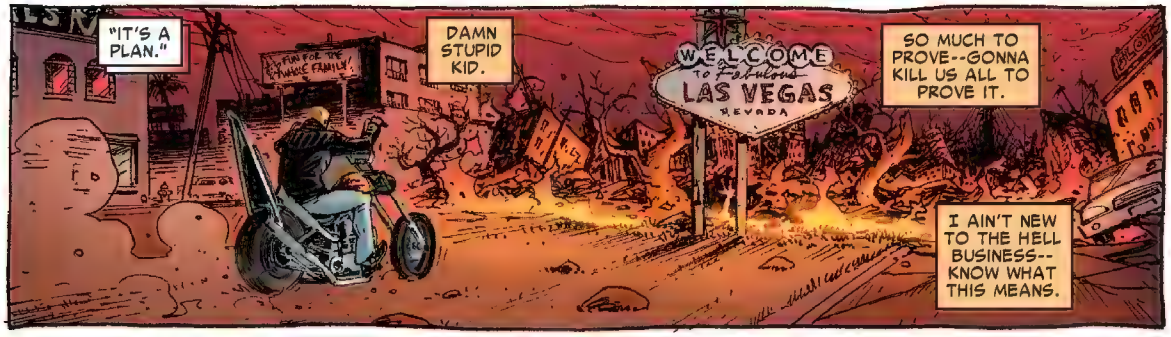
THE SOULS CHOKE--SCREAMING LOUDER THE CLOSER I GET.
ANGUISH BORN OF MISDEED AND UNNATURAL BARGAIN.
THEY WARN THAT IF I DO NOT STOP THE MAN RESPONSIBLE...
...ALL WILL SUFFER THEIR FATE.
OH, NO! HOW DID SHE FIND US?!
YEAH, LOOK OUT, IT'S THE GHOST RIDER. WHAT WILL WE DO?
THEY SEEK TO OPEN A BLACK DOORWAY.
SEEK TO BRING SOMETHING EVIL TO EARTH--
I WILL COUNTER THE DEVICE'S DIRECTION.
CLOSE OFF WHATEVER IT IS ATTEMPTING TO OPEN.
ROUND AND ROUND AND ROUND SHE GOES...

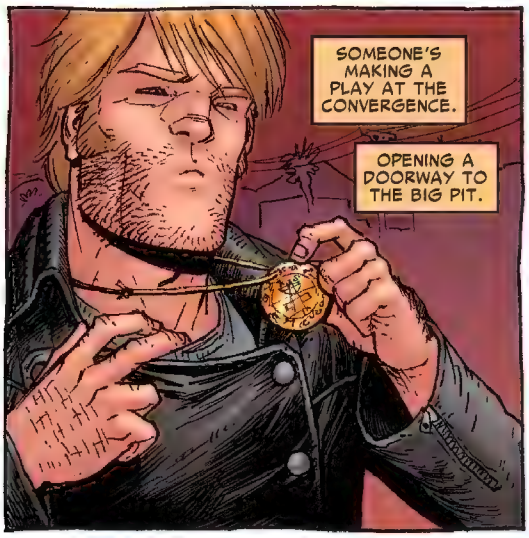

"...AND WHAT SHE BRINGS, NOBODY KNOWS?!"
THEY RISE FROM THE GUTTERS OF HELL.
WHAT HAVE I DONE? ACTIVATED IT-- OPENED THE DOORWAY
SO ARROGANT.
I NEVER COULD HAVE DONE THIS WITH ANY OTHER SOUL IN COMMAND OF THE SPIRIT OF VENGEANCE.
YOU HAVE POWERED THE CENTRIFUGE, OPENED THE DOOR--
YOU'VE BROUGHT HELL TO EARTH!
BUT DON'T THINK ABOUT STOPPING!
IF YOU STOP SPINNING THE DOORWAY WILL REVERSE THE PULL AND THAT, DEAR GIRL, WOULD DRAG EARTH DOWN INTO HELL!

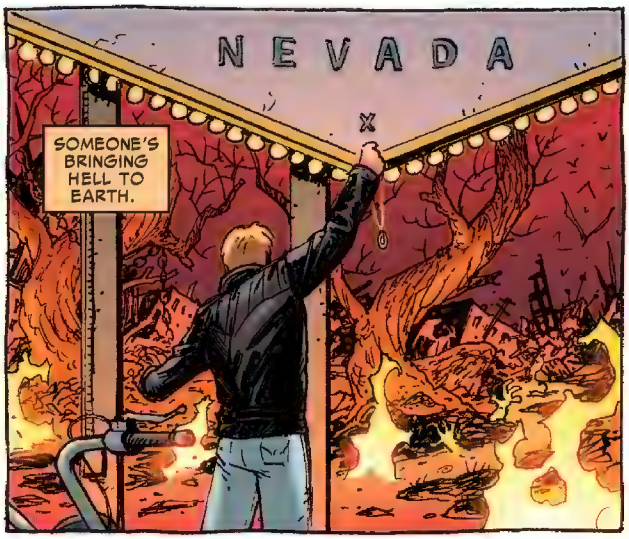
"YOU'VE GOT WHAT DANTE ALIGHIERI WOULD CALL ONE HELL OF AN IRONIC TORMENT AWAITING YOU."
YOU'RE A DAMN DISGRACE!
YOU DON'T KNOW THE HALF OF IT, BUDDY.
TWOKK
BUT I GOT MY REASONS.
BOOOOOOOM
HEY--
THIS GROUND FIRE...
THIS ONE OF YOUR POWERS?
NO...I THOUGHT IT WAS YOURS.
SORRY, COWARD...

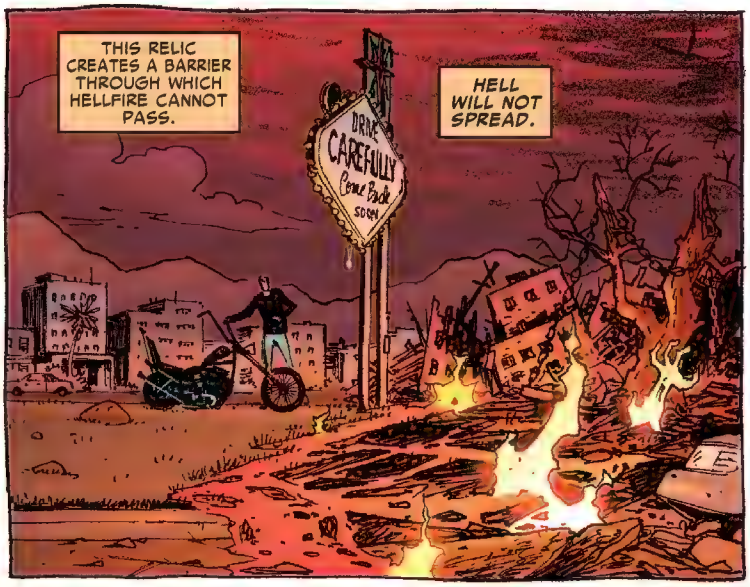

...I DON'T KNOW WHAT THE HELL THIS IS.
HOLY GOD.
T-THOSE ARE DEMONS...
"...HELL IS EXACTLY WHAT THIS IS."
GO! RUN! I'LL TAKE C--
SHARP
YOU SUFFER BILE! YOU DIGEST SLOW!
NO-- NO!
RATHUMOOOM
DAMN RIGHT.

FRONT AN' CENTER, BOY.
HELL'S ON THE LOOSE AND MY MONEY SAYS THAT BLACK TOWER HAS SOMETHING TO DO WITH IT.
WHY AM I TAKING ORDERS FROM YOU?
I'M A GENERAL. YOU'RE A CORPORAL.
FINE. WE'LL JUST FINISH BEATING ON EACH OTHER LATER?

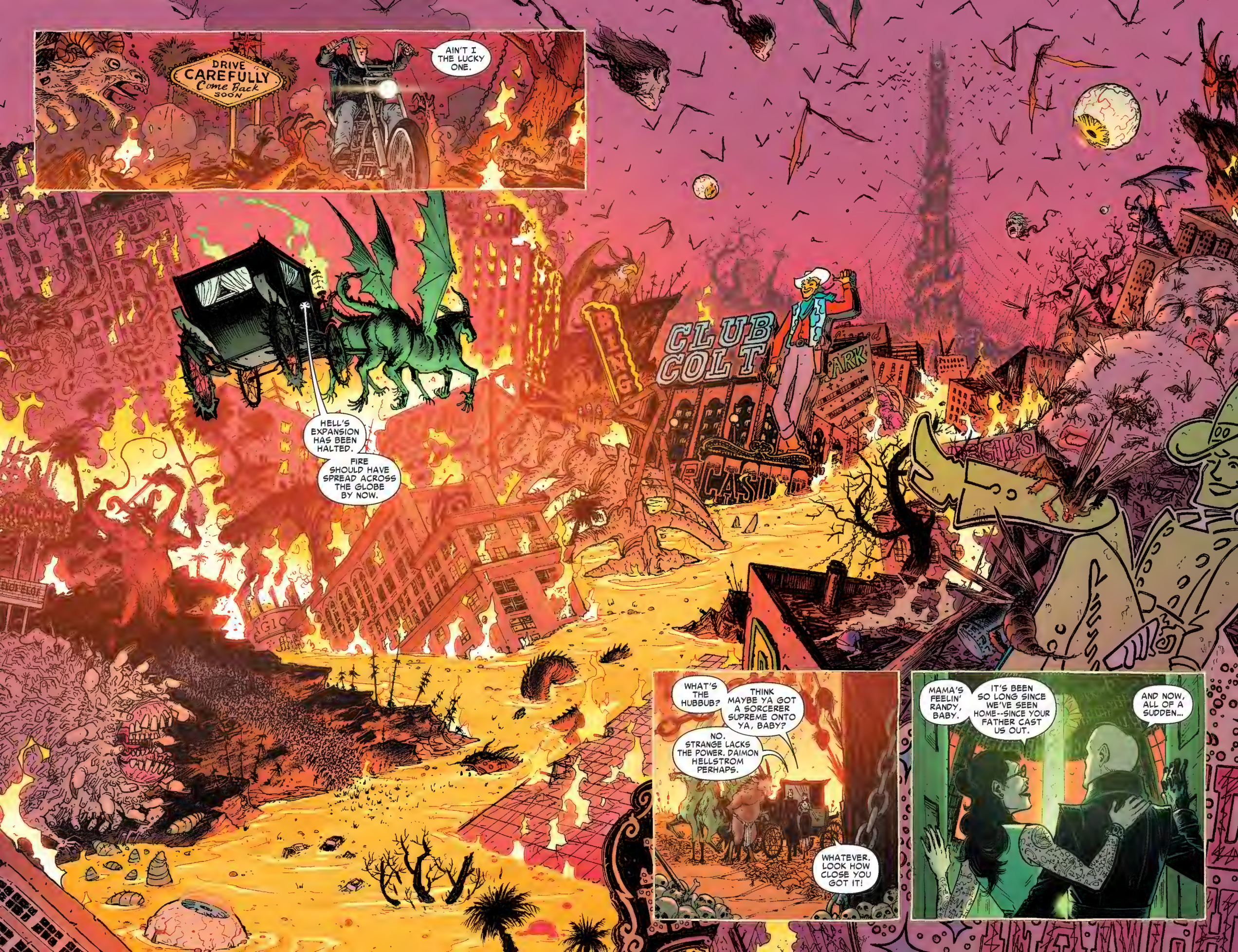

"IT'S A PLAN."
DAMN STUPID KID.
WELCOME to Fabulous LAS VEGAS NEVADA
SO MUCH TO PROVE--GONNA KILL US ALL TO PROVE IT.
I AIN'T NEW TO THE HELL BUSINESS--KNOW WHAT THIS MEANS.


SOMEONE'S MAKING A PLAY AT THE CONVERGENCE.
OPENING A DOORWAY TO THE BIG PIT.


NEVADA
SOMEONE'S BRINGING HELL TO EARTH.


THIS RELIC CREATES A BARRIER THROUGH WHICH HELLFIRE CANNOT PASS.
HELL WILL NOT SPREAD.
DRIVE CAREFULLY Come Back SOON

BUT SOMEBODY'S GOTTA GO TO HELL AND TAMP THE BASTARDS BACK DOWN.


DRIVE CAREFULLY Come Back SOON
AIN'T I THE LUCKY ONE.
HELL'S EXPANSION HAS BEEN HALTED.
FIRE SHOULD HAVE SPREAD ACROSS THE GLOBE BY NOW.
CLUB COLT
WHAT'S THE HUBBUB?
THINK MAYBE YA GOT A SORCERER SUPREME ONTO YA, BABY?
NO. STRANGE LACKS THE POWER. DAIMON HELLSTROM PERHAPS.
WHATEVER. LOOK HOW CLOSE YOU GOT IT!
MAMA'S FEELIN' RANDY, BABY.
IT'S BEEN SO LONG SINCE WE'VE SEEN HOME--SINCE YOUR FATHER CAST US OUT.
AND NOW, ALL OF A SUDDEN...

...HELL BOWS TO BLACKHEART.
JUST IN TIME.
IF I HAD TO DISGUISE MYSELF AS ONE OF THE MEAT SACKS FOR ANOTHER MINUTE I WOULD HAVE CLAWED MY EYES OUT.
DON'T GET ME WRONG, IT HASN'T BEEN ALL BAD...
...WE'VE FOUND USES FOR FLESH.
NOW, TIME TO GLOAT.
AFTER BEING CAST OUT AND LEFT POWERLESS ALL THESE YEARS, I'M DYING TO FIND OUT...
...HOW IS YOUR CORNER OF HELL TONIGHT, FATHER?
SECURE, THOUGH I CAN SEE IT WAS NOT PART OF YOUR SCHEME TO LEAVE IT AS SUCH, WHELP.

YOU THOUGHT YOU'D UPROOT ALL OF HELL, PILFERING IT AWAY TO EARTH.
INSTEAD YOU'VE MANAGED TO DRAW IN A SMALL, MEANINGLESS CORNER.
BUT, I CAN'T IMAGINE YOU'VE CALLED ME, TO BRAG ABOUT YOUR FAILURE...
FAILED, MEPHISTO? FAILED?
I HAVE DRAWN HELL TO EARTH!
YES, A SMALL BIT OF HELL NOW TOUCHES A SMALL BIT OF EARTH.
SOMETHING YOU HAVE ATTEMPTED MANY TIMES AND FAILED!
AND HAD YOU MANAGED TO PULL HELL UP I WOULD BE THERE TO GIVE YOU THE HUG AND KISS ON YOUR FOREHEAD YOU SO CLEARLY DESIRE.
"WHAT A GOOD BOY," I'D SAY.
"CASTING YOU OUT OF HELL TURNED YOU INTO A TRUE DEVIL."
SOON ALL THE SOULS OF EARTH AND HELL WILL BE MINE, OLD MAN.
SOON I WILL HAVE MORE POWER THAN YOU COULD DREAM--
I WILL TORMENT YOU FOR ETERNITY!
KRRASH!!!

FATHER WILL BE ANGRY. HE WILL TRY TO HARM US.
BRING ME THE SYMBIOTE WARRIORS, MY GUARDIANS, THEY ARE TO NEVER LEAVE MY SIDE.
HMM, A BIT OF A PROBLEM...
"...SOMEONE'S GONE AN' ALREADY RELEASED THEM."
GHAWAKK!
EVERYTHING IS VERY BAD AND VERY ODD.
THE SKY IS ON FIRE.
SCENT ON THE AIR--TRUE BRIMSTONE.
I'VE SMELLED IT ONLY ONCE BEFORE...
...IN HELL.
THIS IS THE *VERY WORST THING* I'VE EVER SEEN IN MY LIFE.

IDIOT! DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHAT YOU'VE DONE?!
IF I STOP, THE CENTRIFUGE WILL TURN THE OTHER DIRECTION-- IT WILL SUCK EARTH INTO HELL!
THEN YOU HAVE TO GO STOP WHOEVER CAST THE SPELL.
I'LL KEEP THIS THING SPINNING.
THE SUFFERING SPIRITS WILL TEAR YOU APART!
I'M MADE OF STERN STUFF--I CAN SURVIVE 'EM-- FOR A WHILE.
IT'S THE ONLY CHOICE WE'VE GOT THANKS TO YOUR RECKLESSNESS-- NOW GO--
"--CLEAN UP YOUR MESS!"
WHAT ARE WE GONNA DO ABOUT THEM AVENGERS, BABY?
NERDS DO SO LOVE TO PUNCH POOR MISUNDERSTOODS SUCH AS US.
THE HEROES WILL COME-- WILL FIND ME PREPARED.
THE MIRROR KNOWS THE WAY.

KRAUSHH
THE MIRROR WILL BE KEY--
YOU. ARE YOU THE PIG WHO STOLE MY BLOOD?
YOU THE FREAK RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL THIS?
I AM AND I AM.
GUILTY OF ALL CHARGES.
THEN I GUESS WE HAVE TO BUST YOU UP TO UNDO IT.
EASY ON THE THREATS.
READ THIS THING'S AVENGERS FILE.
REAL, REAL BAD.

KRASH
DIDN'T I TELL YOU WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF YOU STOPPED POWERING THE CENTRIFUGE, DEAR GIRL?
REVERSE THIS NOW OR SUFFER VENGEANCE.
YOU ARE IN HELL, SPIRIT. I AM A PRINCE OF HELL.
IT NOURISHES ME. EMPOWERS ME.
YOU ARE FOREIGN HERE. WEAK.
H'ELIAN'S MIRROR CAULDRON. STEAL NOW THE IMPRESSION OF THEIR SOUL'S TRUE FORM!
TWIST IT.
INVERT IT.

I DON'T KNOW WHO YOU PEOPLE ARE, BUT WHATEVER COMES OUT OF THAT MIRROR, WE TAKE IT DOWN TOGETHER.

DON'T TRY AND GIVE ME ORDERS, KID. I'LL KEEP THE LOT OF YOU SAFE AS I CAN.

JUST STAY OUT OF MY WAY. WE HAVE PERSONAL BUSINESS.

VENGEANCE WILL BE MINE!

REFLECTOR OF INNER LIES!
ALL WHO GAZE ON THE MADNESS MIRROR DIE AT THE HANDS OF THEIR ANTITHESES!
Ichor
The Evangelist
X-666
Encephalon
CIRCLE OF FOUR

13 Variant by Clayton Crain

13.1

Las Vegas Border.
WELCOME
Fabulous
LAS VEGA
BEEN PUSHING AGAINST THIN AIR FOR TEN MINUTES. HNNNNNN...
YOU EVER TIRE OF LAW ENFORCEMENT, YOU COULD MAKE A GO OF IT AS A DAMN GOOD MIME, JERRY. I TELL YA.
HOW'S A WORKING MAN SUPPOSED TO MAKE HIS LIVING IN THIS ECONOMY IF INVISIBLE DAMN BARRIERS JUST SPRING UP OUTTA NOWHERE, HUH?
TIMES ARE HARD ENOUGH FOR HONEST FOLK. THAT'S TRUE.
SOMETHING UNNATURAL'S GOING DOWN IN VEGAS. MORESO THAN NORMAL.
YOU SEE THAT NECKLACE THING HANGING ON THE SIGN THERE?
USING DEDUCTIVE REASONING, I FIGURE THAT MAY JUST HAVE SOMETHING TO DO WITH THIS. ALTHOUGH WHAT IT MEANS, EXACTLY...
IT IS AN IMMENSELY POWERFUL AND INCREDIBLY OLD AMULET FROM A DIMENSION VERY NEAR TO HERE BUT YET INCREDIBLY FAR AWAY...
HUH?

AND, IF THE SPIRIT WORLD SINGS TRUE, IT IS CURRENTLY ALL THAT IS STOPPING THE PLANET EARTH BEING ENTIRELY OVERRUN BY THE NEFARIOUS DENIZENS OF HELL ITSELF.
DON'T MIND THE DOCTOR. HE DOES LOVE A BIT OF MELODRAMA.
BUT HE'S RIGHT ABOUT THE HELL THING, YOU KNOW.
Daimon Hellstrom, Son of Satan.
Doctor Strange, Master of the Mystic Arts.
HOW'S A WORKING MAN SUPPOSED TO MAKE HIS LIVING IN THIS ECONOMY IF THE PLANET EARTH IS ENTIRELY OVERRUN BY THE NEFARIOUS DENIZENS OF HELL ITSELF?
BETTER CALL THIS IN.
I'LL SEE WHAT I CAN DO TO PASS THE BARRIER.
YOU WON'T SUCCEED, DAIMON. THAT TRINKET WILL STOP ANYTHING GETTING IN OR OUT. WHICH WE CAN CURRENTLY BE VERY THANKFUL FOR.
HMMM. I WONDER WHY IT'S HERE. THE LAST I SAW OF IT, I GAVE IT TO HAWKEYE TO TRY AND HELP HIM CAPTURE SOMETHING IMMENSELY DANGEROUS.
WHICH WAS?

"THE GHOST RIDER.
"BLAZE IS INVOLVED IN THIS, SOMEWHERE, I IMAGINE. VEGAS STRIKES ME AS HIS SORT OF TAWDRY PLAYGROUND."
NNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNHHHHH!!!
Blackheart's Hell Centrifuge.
Johnny Blaze, Ex-Ghost Rider.
TOLD ALEJANDRA I COULD KEEP THIS... THING...SPINNING IN ORDER TO STOP...EARTH BEIN' SUCKED DOWN INTO HELL.
MAY HAVE LIED ABOUT THAT.
ALEJANDRA, GIRL. YOU BEST HURRY SOME.
I'M NOT... SURE HOW LONG I CAN DO...THIS.
IT'S UP TO YOU TO SAVE THE DAY.
MAGIC FORCES... NNNNNNN...DAMN... RIPPING ME TO...
...PIECES.
YOU'RE THE ONE TRYING TO SPREAD THE LAKE OF FIRE OVER HUMANKIND?

Blackheart, SON OF MEPHISTO.

GUILTY.

Red Hulk

YOU LOOKED A LITTLE DIFFERENT WHEN YOU CONNED ME INTO RIDING THAT GIANT CENTRIFUGE AND OPENING UP THE DOORS OF HELL FOR YOU!

NOW THERE'S AN EVERYDAY CAUTIONARY TALE WE CAN ALL LEARN A LESSON FROM.

YOU MADE HORROR SHOWS OUT OF MY BLOOD?

NO. THIS IS BAD. THIS IS REALLY BAD.

Ghost Rider

HULK'S ACTUALLY... SCARED?

Venom

X-23

HE'S RIGHT TO BE.

THAT MIRROR? IT'S AN INTERESTING ADDITION TO A ROOM. YOU STARE INTO IT AND WHAT COMES OUT IS YOUR ANTITHESIS.

BOTH YOUR GREATEST STRENGTH AND YOUR MOST...PERSONAL WEAKNESS.

A LIFE CREATES SUCH SPECIFIC WOUNDS.

Ichor

The Evangelist

Encephalon

X-666

AND YOURS IS VERY INTERESTING, ALEJANDRA.

HUH?

IT'S A WOUND I COULD HEAL FOR YOU.

GARI OYLE! TAKE A SQUADRON, FIND OUT WHAT'S STOPPING THE EXPANSION OF MY KINGDOM AND DESTROY IT!

LOVE IT WHEN YOU'RE MASTERFUL.

NOW...
I WANT THE SPIRIT OF VENGEANCE, AND WHAT THE PRINCE OF HELL WANTS, HE TENDS TO GET.
ANTITHESES! KILL THE REST OF THEM!
SWASSHH
DAMMIT!
YOU COME TO VEGAS FOR SOME PERFECTLY RESPECTABLE ALCOHOLISM AND SELF-PITY, AND THIS IS WHAT YOU GET?
IT'S DEPRESSING!
GHOST RIDER! FOLLOW THE BUTT-UGLY ONE WITH THE WINGS. KEEP THIS MADNESS FROM SPREADING ANY FURTHER!
STOP HER! DO YOU UNDERSTAND?!
BOSSY SUNBURNT STEROID FREAK.
WHAT DID YOU SAY?
COVER IT UP. IN BUFF MONSTER-HIDE. ALL YOU WANT.

I CAN SMELL A DESPERATE OLD MAN A MILE AWAY.
DESPERATE OLD MAN?
SHE SEEMS NICE.
SHUT UP.
ICHOR... FOLLOWS!
GARGOYLES CAN'T MATCH ME FOR SPEED.
THIS'LL BE EASY.
PERHAPS...
BUT FIRST, ALEJANDRA... I HAVE AN OFFER FOR YOU...

WE CAN DEAL WITH YOUR GOING AWOL LATER, SOLDIER. THIS IS BLACKHEART WE'RE DEALING WITH. WE NEED TO GET BACK UP THERE AND...
YEAH, YEAH. I GOT THIS ONE.
YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE A CHALLENGE? MY CHALLENGE.
A GOOD LITTLE ONE IS ALWAYS GOING TO LOSE TO A GOOD BIG ONE, MY FOOTBALL COACH ALWAYS TOLD ME.
I AIN'T BIG ON CHURCH, POPS. AND YOU LOOK SO... WEAK.
WEAKNESS?
YOU KNOW ALL ABOUT WEAKNESS, DON'T YOU, SON?
FER INSTANCE...JUST HOW BAD HAVE YOU COME TO RELY ON THAT ALIEN SUIT OF YOURS?
WHA... HOW ARE YOU...
WAIT!
THE WEAK ALWAYS GO LOOKING FOR POWER FROM OTHER THINGS. A FOOTBALL, A GUN, A SYMBIOTE...
GET HANDED A LIMITLESS THING AND YOU TURN IT INTO A PAROCHIAL CRUTCH.

GIVEN YOUR SOMEWHAT GLARING PHYSICAL LIMITATIONS, I GUESS YOU'RE ALWAYS GONNA NEED A CRUTCH OF SOME SORT THOUGH, RIGHT?
SORRY, TWO CRUTCHES.
THE ALIEN SUIT'S ONE... YOUR OWN LITTLE SCI-FI SUPER-WHEELCHAIR.
ALCOHOL WOULD BE THE OTHER.
FOLLOWING IN DADDY'S FOOTSTEPS...
THE PRECIOUS THINGS WE INHERIT, EH? THAT OUR PARENTS PASS DOWN TO US.
THE FATHER. THE SON...
YOU THINK THEY KNOW WHAT THEY'RE GIVING US, ON SOME SUBCONSCIOUS LEVEL, FLASH?
DADDY KNEW WHAT HE WAS DOING TO YOU, YOU KNOW, WITH THE DRINKING AND THE BEATINGS.
HE JUST DIDN'T CARE. HE BARELY NOTICED YOU EXISTED.
YOU WERE CRIPPLED LONG BEFORE THE WAR TOOK YOUR LEGS.

YOU! MS. WOLVERINE OR WHATEVER YOUR DAMN NAME IS!
THIS...
ARE YOU *LISTENING* TO ME?
THIS IS *HELL.* BUT...
YOU'RE WONDERING HOW YOU CAN BE IN HELL IF YOU DON'T HAVE A SOUL?
AWWWW.
IT'S SO SWEET THAT YOU CARE.
POOR X-23!
A MURDERING THING IS ALL SHE'LL BE!
GROWN AS A CLONE TO SLASH AND KILL!
HER INHUMAN CRIMES WILL MAKE YOU ILL!
YOU'RE THE BLONDE, PURE, ALL-AMERICAN CHEERLEADER I CAN NEVER BE. I GET IT. I'M NOT THAT UPSET BY IT.
HELL'S GOING TO HAVE TO DO BETTER THAN THAT.
BLACKHEART STOLE MY BLOOD AND USED IT TO CREATE MONSTERS, AND HE'S GOING TO DIE FOR THAT.

YOU KNOW THAT'S NOT HEROISM, DON'T YOU?
IT'S MURDER.
AAAAAHHHH!
I'M YOUR ANTITHESIS BECAUSE I'M MORE THAN YOU, DO YOU "GET" THAT?
I HAVE TWO LAYERS. I'M "NUANCED."
ON THE SURFACE, I SMILE AND AM SWEET. I LOVE MY MOM AND DAD AND THE PRESIDENT AND APPLE PIE.
BUT BENEATH THE SURFACE, I'M A REMORSELESS KILLER.
MOST HUMANS ARE "NUANCED", YOU KNOW. THEY MAY NOT BE KILLERS, BUT THERE'S AN INNER LIFE THAT THE WORLD NEVER GETS TO SEE.
THUNK
YOU'RE NOT "NUANCED."
BECAUSE YOU'RE NOT HUMAN.
YOU ARE EXACTLY WHAT WE SEE ON THE SURFACE. A CHEAP WOLVERINE KNOCK-OFF.
A KILLER.
THAT'S RIGHT...TRY AND DO WHAT YOU DO. THE ONLY THING YOU CAN DO.
KILL.

WHERE SHE'S GOIN'...SHE'LL BE RIPPED TO PIECES IN THERE ALONE! STRATEGIC STRENGTH IN NUMBERS. WE NEED TO WORK IN A GROUP.
UNDER MY ORDERS.
GOD, I MISS THE MILITARY.
MMMPPPHHHH!
MMMMMMPPPHHH!
THAT'S EASY FOR YOU TO SAY.
SO MUCH OF PROJECTING AUTHORITY IS IN THE VOCALS THOUGH.
WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU SUPPOSED TO BE, ANYWAY? A BRAIN?
YOU'RE CONFUSED, SON! THE GREEN ONE'S THE DUMMY. IF YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE SOME KIND OF OPPOSITE.
I HAVE A FINELY HONED TACTICAL MIN...
STOP.

HUH?
HOW ARE YOU...
DROP AND GIVE ME TWENTY.
AAAAA!
ATTEN-HUT!
SMASSHHH
YOU... YOU'RE GIVING ME ORDERS?
IS THAT IT?
FEEL TERROR.
WHAT...WHAT ARE THOSE... THINGS? ARE THEY INSECTS? OH GOD.
EXPERIENCE DEPRESSION.
THE OTHERS... WOULDN'T FOLLOW MY ORDERS. NO ONE... FOLLOWS MY ORDERS ANYMORE. THEY USED TO BUT...

CRY FOR YOUR...
MOTHERRRRR!
POP EYES
ENTERTAINING.
I DO LOVE A BIT OF PREYING ON PERSONAL FRAILTIES.
BUT WHILE IT TAKES THE SUPERFREAKS OUT OF THE GAME IT DOESN'T GET ME THE TWO THINGS I WANT.
ONE: THE SPIRIT OF VENGEANCE.
"AND TWO: FOR HELL TO SPREAD ACROSS THIS HAIRY FLESHBAG OF A PLANET."
THE RIDER'S GOING TO GET THERE BEFORE US!

WORD SPREADS FAST IN HELL, ALEJANDRA.
I KNOW WHAT YOU DID IN NICARAGUA.
GET. OUT. OF. MY. HEAD!
SWEETIE, I'M BLACKHEART. I'M THE PRINCE OF HELL.
IF YOU WANT TO GET YOUR HANDS ON THE SIN YOU WIPED OUT OF THOSE IMPOVERISHED PEOPLE. RETURN THEIR HUMANITY TO THEM...
...JUST ASK AND IT'S YOURS.
ONE SMALL DISCLAIMER: IF YOUR ANTITHESIS RIPS YOUR SOUL TO SHREDS, THEN THIS OFFER IS NULL AND VOID.
KA-THOOOOM

THAT ACTUALLY HURT.
WHAT ARE YOU?
I AM THE BLOOD OF THE GODS!
I AM PURE RETRIBUTION, GIRL. WITHOUT YOUR HUMAN FRAILTIES.
YOUR BRAND OF VENGEANCE IS NOT HOLY. IT IS JUST SELFISH MORTAL REVENGE.
I AM HUMANITY'S ULTIMATE REPRISAL.
AND YOU HAVE SO MUCH TO PAY FOR, ALEJANDRA.

"YOU'RE RIGHT."
ALEJANDRA WAS A BAD GIRL.
"YOU WANT ME TO CRY FOR FORGIVENESS?"
THERE IS NO FORGIVENESS.
"YOU PLAY ON WEAKNESS."
THERE IS NO WEAKNESS.
"YES."
YOU MAY HAVE POWER OVER ALEJANDRA.

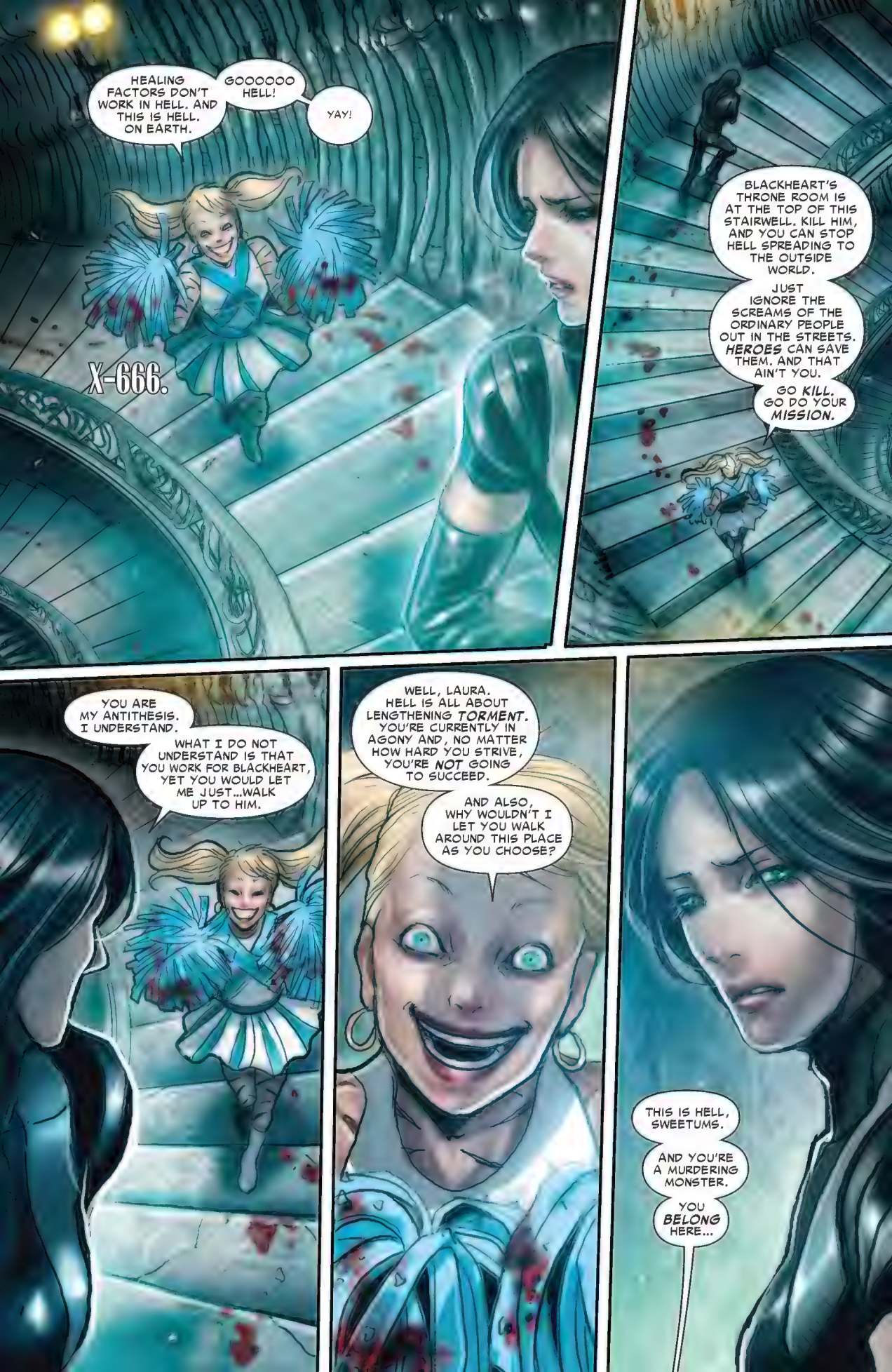
BUT ALEJANDRA IS DEAD.
THE GHOST RIDER'S ALL THAT'S LEFT!
FZZZ

UNNNHH...
UGH. HE WAS HUMAN DESPITE ALL THAT. AT LEAST SOMEONE STILL IS.
NOW, WHERE DID THE GARGOYLE GO?
THAT WAS... IMPRESSIVE.
I COULD REALLY USE A SPIRIT OF VENGEANCE IN MY NEW KINGDOM.
SO, HOW'S ABOUT I GIVE YOU THE NICARAGUAN SOULS AND YOU DO ME A LITTLE FAVOR IN RETURN.
WHAT DO YOU SAY?
"OH NO..."
WHAT WAS THAT, STEPHEN?
I SENSE GREAT...
NEVADA

"...WEAKNESS."
...HU...
...HELP...
I DON'T THINK WE CAN STOP THIS FROM SPREADING.
HELL... STEPHEN.
HELL IS COMING.

13.2

Las Vegas, Nevada.
At The Border Of Hell.
"HMM...THERE ARE QUESTIONS EVERY MORTAL SHOULD ASK THEMSELVES.
"ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT IS...
"WHAT ARE YOU WILLING TO DIE FOR?
"OR, MORE TO THE POINT...
"WHAT ARE YOU WILLING TO DIE TO STOP?"
THEY WON'T...
WHY WON'T THESE... CUTS...
...HEAL?
AW NOW, X-23, YOU'RE A CLEVER LITTLE PIGLET. YOU KNOW THE ANSWER TO THAT.


HEALING FACTORS DON'T WORK IN HELL. AND THIS IS HELL. ON EARTH.
GOOOOOO HELL!
YAY!
X-666.
BLACKHEART'S THRONE ROOM IS AT THE TOP OF THIS STAIRWELL. KILL HIM, AND YOU CAN STOP HELL SPREADING TO THE OUTSIDE WORLD.
JUST IGNORE THE SCREAMS OF THE ORDINARY PEOPLE OUT IN THE STREETS. *HEROES* CAN SAVE THEM. AND THAT AIN'T YOU.
GO KILL. GO DO YOUR *MISSION*.
YOU ARE MY ANTITHESIS. I UNDERSTAND.
WHAT I DO NOT UNDERSTAND IS THAT YOU WORK FOR BLACKHEART, YET YOU WOULD LET ME JUST...WALK UP TO HIM.
WELL, LAURA. HELL IS ALL ABOUT LENGTHENING *TORMENT*. YOU'RE CURRENTLY IN AGONY AND, NO MATTER HOW HARD YOU STRIVE, YOU'RE *NOT* GOING TO SUCCEED.
AND ALSO, WHY WOULDN'T I LET YOU WALK AROUND THIS PLACE AS YOU CHOOSE?
THIS IS HELL, SWEETUMS.
AND YOU'RE A MURDERING MONSTER.
YOU *BELONG* HERE...

"...YOU ALL BELONG HERE."
DAMN "ANTITHESIS" COST ME TIME.
THE GARGOYLE'S TOO FAR AWAY NOW-- GOT TO GET TO HER BEFORE SHE MAKES HELL SPREAD.
WHERE YOU WILL SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND.
SHUT UP, BLACKHEART AND GET OUT OF MY HEAD!
YOU OFFERING ME A ONE-TIME DEAL IS ONE THING...
...BUT THE SPIRIT OF VENGEANCE SERVES NO ONE.
AND I DON'T RECALL AGREEING TO WORK FOR YOU YET.

SO, FOR NOW, I THINK I'LL KILL YOUR DEMONS.
THUNK!!!
...AND SNAP YOUR BELOVED GIRLFRIEND'S NECK.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
WHA?
YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHAT IT WILL COST ME IF I DO AS YOU ASK?
AHHHHH!!!!!
YOU WANT ANYTHING IMPORTANT YOU HAVE TO SACRIFICE.
WAIT...
ABOUT TIME YOU MADE YOUR OWN...
WAIT!!!
HOW MUCH DOES YOUR LITTLE "KINGDOM" MEAN TO YOU, EXACTLY?
NO!!!!
ANTITHESES! TO THE TOWN LIMITS!

Hellvegas.
STOP THE GHOST RIDER!!!
NOW!!!
AW, AND ME AND YER LITTLE BETRAYING SYMBIOTE WERE HAVING SO MUCH FUN MESSING WITH YOUR SOUL.
The Evangelist.
GOTTA GO, FLASH. THE BOSS IS CALLING ME.
JUST ONE WORD OF WARNING FOR YA.
YOU FOLLOW AND YOU GONNA DIE.
YOU FEEL THAT, DON'T YOU, SON?
YOU KNOW IT.
BUT YOU PUT YER LITTLE BLACKHEARTED SUIT BACK ON, BY ALL MEANS.
AFTER ALL, YER NOTHING WITHOUT IT.

HULK?
THAT... BRAIN MATTER... THING, IT KNEW. IT KNEW EXACTLY WHAT I WAS AFRAID OF.
IT MADE ME CRY FOR MY MOTHER.
YEAH. ME TOO.
WE DO NOT TALK ABOUT THIS.
UNDERSTAND?
UH... YOU'VE GOT A...A...
A WHAT?
NEVER MIND.
GHOST RIDER. EDGE OF TOWN.
I HEARD THAT TOO. SOMETHING'S KEEPING HELL BACK, BUT IF WE DON'T STOP THEM IT'LL SPREAD.
WE CAN'T BEAT THOSE THINGS. AND IT TOLD ME THAT IF I FOLLOWED IT I'D DIE.
IT WAS TELLING THE TRUTH. I... FEEL IT.
YEAH, ME TOO.
SO...
YOU'VE GOT A PLAN, RIGHT?

SOLDIER...
I'VE ALWAYS GOT A PLAN.
I'LL BE BACK SOON, LAURA. I'M NEEDED ELSEWHERE.
KEEP SMILING!
NNNNNNN!!!!
YOU'RE THE LITTLE ASSASSIN THAT'S COME TO MURDER ME?
YES.

YOU'RE WELCOME TO TRY BUT BLACKHEART HAS BODYGUARDS.
YOU MAY JUST RECOGNIZE THEM.
AFTER ALL, THEY'RE MADE FROM YOUR BLOOD.
ARE YOU WATCHING, BLACKHEART? I HOPE SO.
BECAUSE WE'RE BOTH ABOUT TO KNOW THE MEANING OF LOSS.
MY...MY GARGOYLES... WILL--
I'M STILL THE GHOST RIDER.
YOU'VE CAUSED A LOT OF SUFFERING HERE. YOU'RE GOING TO PAY FOR THAT.
THWK!
THAT IS DECIDEDLY UN-AMERICAN BEHAVIOR!
AAAAHHH!!!
YOUR GARGOYLES ARE WISE ENOUGH TO RECOGNIZE A SPIRIT OF GOD'S PURE WRATH OFFERING MUCH-NEEDED VENGEANCE.
AND IF I CAUSE YOUR BOYFRIEND AGONY AS HE WATCHES? WELL, THAT SITS FINE WITH ME.

LAST CHANCE, ALEJANDRA...
TAKE BLACKHEART'S DEAL AND JOIN US...
ORPH PHURM IMTH GHELLLLTTHHH PHOFETHERRR!!!
ENCEPHALIS SAID, "OR BURN IN HELL FOREVER."
YOU CAN'T BEAT THE THREE OF US, ALEJANDRA, AND, LET'S FACE IT...
YOU BELONG WITH US MORE THAN YOU DO WITH THEM.
GOD'S SPIRIT OF VENGEANCE YOU MAY BE, BUT YOU CARRY DEMON INSIDE YOU.
JOIN US!! YES!!!
A NEW TEAM MEMBER!!! OOH, HOW EXCITING, I KNOW A SONG AND A ROUTINE WE CAN ALL DO ABOUT THAT!!!
I DON'T DO DANCE ROUTINES.
AND WE CAN ALL BE THANKFUL FOR THAT.
SLAM

HELLO BAD GUY NEIGHBOUR! I'M VENOM AND THESE BE MY GUNS!
VENOM, EACH ANTITHESIS PLAYS ON OUR SPECIFIC WEAKNESSES. SO CRISS-CROSS TARGETS.
AND DON'T LET THAT THING GET IN YOUR HEAD! FILL YOUR MIND WITH SOMETHING ELSE!
CUE OVER-CATCHY REO SPEEDWAGON!
"NO I CAN'T FIGHT THAT FEELING ANY MORRRRRRE..."
HA! IT'S WORKING!!!
THEY LIED ABOUT US DYING HERE!!! TACTICS PLUS A BIG RED FIST WINS!!
BOOM!
GHOST RIDER, WE HAVE THIS.
GO! STOP THAT GARGOYLE.
YOU FEEL YOUR FISTS ARE STRONGER THAN HELL?

YOU ARE A FOOL.

THOOOM!
YOU KILLED HIM YOU SONOFA--
YOU WILL PAY FOR THIS!
SHOW ME...
...WHAT'S INSIDE.
NOTHING.
RIIIIPPPP!
THERE IS NOTHING.

RAAAAAAAA!!!!!
BRRAAAAAAPPPPP!!!
GO! I'LL DEAL WITH THEM!
RED HULK JUST DIED SO YOU COULD OUTRACE THAT GARGOYLE AND STOP HELL SPREADING.
YOU CAN'T FIGHT THEM ALONE. THEY'LL KILL YOU LIKE THEY KILLED RED HULK.
LIKE THEY'VE KILLED ME.
SO THEY'LL KILL ME.
BUT FIRST I'LL HOLD THE LINE.

RAAAAA!!!!
YOU MADE THESE...THINGS... FROM MY...
AAHHHH!!!
NNNN!!!!
HNPH!!!
...BLOOD.
YOU MADE THESE... HORRORS FROM...
FROM YOU. YES.
CLONES. JUST LIKE YOU.

KILLING THINGS.
SOULLESS THINGS.
THEY'RE NOT LIKE ME!!!
THEY'RE NOTHING LIKE ME!!!
WAIT!
DON'T YOU WANT TO KNOW IF CLONES HAVE SOULS? I CAN TELL YOU, LAURA.
I MADE THEM. I KNOW THE ANSWER.
I... YES.
SILLY GIRL. YOU'RE SUFFERING IN HELL RIGHT NOW.
YOU CAN'T BE IN HELL WITHOUT A SOUL.
ONLY TROUBLE WITH SOULS?
THEY MAKE PEOPLE STUPID.
CLICK

I HOPE THAT KNOWLEDGE COMFORTS YOU AS YOU DIE.
WHA....
NOOO!
HMMM...
WHAT WAITS BENEATH HELL FOR A SOUL WHO HAS KILLED AS MANY AS YOU?
"HEH...YOU'RE GONNA FAIL, YOU KNOW THAT...
"...YOU'VE ALREADY FAILED."
WE'VE DONE THIS DANCE ONCE BEFORE.
I KNOW ALL YOUR WEAK SPOTS, SON. AND THERE'S A TRUCKLOAD.
CAN'T BEAT ME IF YOU CAN'T BEAT YOURSELF. I KNOW WHAT YOU ARE.
YEAH? SO DO I.
I'M A SOLDIER!
THOSE BIBLE PAGES WILL CUT ANYTHING TO SHREDS, HUH?
WHAT ARE YOU...

THUD
YOU... CAN'T...KILL... ME!!
YEAH. I CAN.
YOU'RE NOT A PERSON.
YOU'RE JUST ALL MY SOFT SPOTS! MY WEAKNESSES! MY INSECURITIES AND INADEQUACIES!
I CREATED YOU...
...SO I CAN DAMN WELL KILL YOU!!!
ACK...
I DID IT.
I HELD THE LINE.

YES.
YOU DID.
SNAP!
DARLING, IF YOU'RE WATCHING...
THE RIDER'S GOING TO GET TO THAT AMULET BEFORE ME.
ALEJANDRA, LISTEN TO ME.
SHUT UP, BLACKHEART. ONE OF YOUR ANTITHESES RIPPED MY CHEST WIDE OPEN.
I CAN FEEL MYSELF DYING. WHAT CAN YOU OFFER A CORPSE?
I'LL PUT THE SOULS BACK INTO THOSE PEOPLE IN NICARAGUA! I'LL DO IT EVEN IF YOU DIE.
STEPHEN...
SOMETHING IS...
IT'S THE RIDER!
REMOVE THE AMULET, ALEJANDRA.
DESTROY THE AMULET...
...AND I WILL PUT RIGHT THOSE WHO YOU WRONGED.
THOSE PEOPLE IN NICARAGUA WILL BE WHOLE AGAIN. THEY WILL BE PROTECTED IN MY NEW KINGDOM.
YOU WILL MAKE AMENDS FOR THE WRONG YOU DID. YOU WILL BE REDEEMED.
I SWEAR!

RIDER...
IT'S A WOMAN...
WHO... DID THIS TO YOU?
WHAT ARE YOU...
DON'T!!!
THAT AMULET IS ALL THAT'S HOLDING HELL BACK FROM ENGULFING THIS PLANET.
PUT IT BACK ON THAT SIGN. NOW!

I'M SORRY.
IMPOSSIBLE...
WHAT COULD KILL THE GHOST RIDER?
HELL, STEPHEN.
AND NOW IT'S HERE.

13.3

I HAVE DESTROYED THE AMULET TO UNDO MY SINS.
IN DOING SO, I HAVE GASSED THE WORLD AND SET IT AFLAME.
HELL WILL TAKE IT ALL.

WHY AM I NOT DEAD?
YOU SHOULD... BE!

YOU WEREN'T SUPPOSED TO CHOOSE SACRIFICE...
YOU WEREN'T SUPPOSED TO CHOOSE...

...DESTRUCTION!
BLACKHEART?

I DIDN'T... RAISE YOU... FOR THIS...
ADAM?! YOU WERE HIM!

YOUR TRAINING, KEEPING ME LOCKED AWAY FROM THE WORLD...
...WAS ALL PART OF THIS SICK PLAN.
HHHHSSSSSSSS....
HOW DID I NOT SEE THIS BEFORE?!
BECAUSE THERE WAS A VEIL OVER YOUR EYES, ALEJANDRA.
IT WAS THERE ALL YOUR LIFE. IT FOLLOWED YOU FROM THE DARK PLACE YOU WERE RAISED, EVEN INTO THE LIGHT.
NOW WHO--I WARN YOU...
BUT THAT VEIL HAS BEEN LIFTED, BECAUSE YOU DIDN'T MAKE THE CHOICE ADAM WANTED OF YOU.
YOU CHOSE YOUR OWN WAY. DO YOU KNOW WHO I AM?
I'M SORRY I COULD NOT BE WITH YOU, I SEARCHED FOR SO LONG.
YOUR STRONG, SHINING HEART HAS BROUGHT US TOGETHER AT LAST.
MAMACITA-- IT IS YOU.
IT IS!
M... MOTHER...?

WILL YOU COME BACK TO US, ALEJANDRA?
YOU CAN BE THE PROTECTOR MEXICO NEEDS.
I WILL. FROM NOW ON.
AND IT WILL BE DONE MY WAY, MAMA.
VVVVRRRMMMM RRRMMMMM
THE WAY OF THE GHOST RIDER!!
THAT ONE GETS ME RIGHT HERE.

COME ON, DOCTOR, WHAT DO YOU THINK HAS HAPPENED?
SOMETHING I'VE NOT SEEN IN MY EXPERIENCE AS EITHER A SORCERER OR A DOCTOR.
WHAT--
WHAT IS IT, DOC?
I CAN TAKE IT.
I KNOW YOU CAN. HOLD YOUR ARM UP AND LOOK, MR. THOMPSON.
IN BLACKHEART'S FINAL ATTACK, THE ALIEN SYMBIOTE WAS FUSED PSYCHICALLY TO YOUR BODY AS WELL AS PHYSICALLY.
BUT ONLY ONE LIFE FORCE COULD STAY, AND IN THE PAST FEW DAYS, YOUR BODY WAS ASSERTING THAT CONTROL.
AS WITH YOUR BATTLE AGAINST THE DEVIL SPAWN, IT APPEARS YOU HAVE WON.
YES... YES!!
MY LEGS!!
I CAN MOVE AGAIN... IT'S ALL ME!

I FEEL GREAT!
I'M SURE YOU DO, BUT STILL TAKE IT EASY.
WE WANT TO THANK YOU-- YOU KEPT THE WORLD FROM GOING DOWN, FLASH.
YOU KNOW, THE AVENGERS COULD USE A FIGHTER LIKE YOU.
THANK YOU, CAPTAIN AMERICA.
BUT I DON'T THINK I WANT TO GO OUT AS VENOM EVER AGAIN.
THAT'S WHAT I WANT TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT, FLASH.
I WAS KINDA HOPING TO TAKE MY LIFE IN A DIFFERENT DIRECTION NOW. DO SOME THINGS I CAN'T IN COSTUME.
AND YOU'VE PROVEN THAT YOU CAN TAKE ON GREAT RESPONSIBILITY.
YOU CAN'T MEAN...NO WAY.
YOU WANT ME TO BECOME THE NEXT SPIDER-MAN?!
WHAT DO YOU SAY?

GET OUT OF MY FRIENDLY NEIGHBORHOOD, OCTOPUS!
ARE YOU OKAY, MISS?
WHUPH!!
YES, BUT COULD YOU SAVE ME AGAIN WITH LESS SHOWING OFF?
RESCUING YOU IS DEMANDING WORK, MISS BRANT.
I CAN GUARANTEE A RAISE, SPIDEY.
HO HO, I LIKE THAT HAPPY ENDING.

WONDER HOW GENERAL HULKSTACHE IS DOING...
AAAA

YOU DON'T HAVE TO SERVE IN SECRET ANYMORE, ROSS. THE PUBLIC HAS BEEN WATCHING THIS AND KNOWS WHAT WAS AT STAKE.
I WANT TO MAKE AN ANNOUNCEMENT.
WE'RE LIVE AT GROUND ZERO IN LAS VEGAS, AND CAPTAIN AMERICA IS GOING TO SPEAK!
TODAY A GREAT EVIL HAS BEEN BEATEN BACK--BY FOUR PEOPLE YOU PROBABLY FEARED.
BUT WE SHOULD KNOW NOW THAT HEROES COME IN ALL FORMS. EVEN ONES THAT LOOK LIKE THREATS TO US.
3
THIS MAN GAVE UP HIS CAREER AND RISKED HIS HUMANITY TO DO WHAT NEEDED TO BE DONE TO HELP THE WORLD.
IT'S TIME WE WELCOMED HIM BACK INTO THE SERVICE OF OUR NATION. YOU KNEW HIM FOR YEARS AS--
"....GENERAL THADDEUS ROSS OF THE ARMY AIR FORCE."
WHAT'S THE STATUS, GENERAL FORTEAN?
U.S. AIR FORCE
YOUR BUSTERS HAVE BROKEN THE RANKS, ROSS.
ONE LAST PUSH SHOULD GET US THROUGH A.I.M.'S INNER DEFENSE TO WHERE M.O.D.O.K. IS HOLED UP.
I THOUGHT THEY'D ALREADY BE IN BY NOW!
DON'T BE SO HARD ON THEM...

"...SINCE YOU BROUGHT THE HULKS IN LINE TO SERVE, A.I.M. IS GOING TO BE ROLLED OVER LIKE EVERY OTHER EVIL EMPIRE YOU'VE GONE AFTER.
"BETTY IS ESPECIALLY TURNING OUT TO BE A CHIP OFF THE OLD BLOCK."
SOMEONE TELL MY DAD TO SEND US AFTER A REAL FORCE NEXT TIME!
HULK SMASH!
STAY DOWN.
HELL, THEY MOVE SO FAST I MISS OUT ON HALF THE FUN!
HOLD THE FORT, REGGIE. I'VE GOT SOME SMASHING TO DO.
ROGER THAT, GENERAL.
WHEN JOHNNY COMES MAR-CHING HOME AGAIN, HUR-RAH HUR-RAH...

NOW WHAT ABOUT LITTLE MISS CLAWS-IT-ALL?
NO!
BLACKHEART!!
GOOD TRAP-- DIDN'T THINK YOU'D SURVIVE THAT, LAURA.
NOT EVEN SURE I WOULD.
WOLVERINE!
BLACKHEART CAUGHT YOU OFF GUARD BY HITTING YOU WHERE IT HURTS MOST.
NOW... DO THAT TO HIM.

I WILL.
EH?
X-23, SHOULDN'T YOU BE--
DEAD?
NO.
THAT WOULD BE YOU.
SHHNNNNK
WILL THIS REALLY KILL HIM?
HE'S A DEMON, LAURA. I DON'T THINK HE CAN DIE, BUT YOU MAY HAVE KICKED HIM OUT OF THE WORLD.
SAME DIFFERENCE, I'D TAKE THAT.
THANKS FOR COMING FOR ME.
I'D LIKE TO TAKE CREDIT, BUT THAT'S NOT WHAT BROUGHT ME HERE.
WHEN YOU SEE, YOU'LL UNDERSTAND.
AND KNOW WHY YOU GOT PULLED INTO THIS IN THE FIRST PLACE.

A WEAPON X LABORATORY!
RIGHT. BLACKHEART WAS BEHIND THE PROGRAM ALL ALONG.
IT ALL TIED INTO HIS HELL-ON-EARTH UNSTOPPABLE ARMY OF DARKNESS HOO HA.
HE WANTED TO MOVE INTO THE EVIL SCIENCE BUSINESS SINCE HIS OLD MAN ALREADY CORNERED THE MARKET ON DARK MAGIC.
BET YOU FOUND EVEN WORSE THAN THIS WHILE YOU WERE HERE, EH?
WOLVERINE... I FOUND OUT I...
I HAVE A SOUL.
I COULD HAVE TOLD YOU THAT, KID.
AND YOUR LIFE IS YOURS TO DO WHATEVER YOU WANT.
SO WHAT'S NEXT?
EVEN THE HARDCORE KILLERS TURN OUT GREAT.
SUNSHINE AND LOLLIPOPS, THIS IS ALL MADE OF AWESOME AND WIN.

I BET IF I PUT MY MIND TO IT I COULD RUN THIS PLACE AS SUCH ALL THE TIME.
THE ULTIMATE DESTINATION SPOT.
NAAAHH.
ALEJANDRA... GHOST RIDER!
COME QUICKLY!
YOU SEEM BIGGER, WALL-CRAWLER!
HAVE YOU BEEN BULKING UP?
WE'VE GOT HIM SURROUNDED-- MOVE IN!
HIT HIM HARD!
WE HAVE TO DESTROY IT.
ALL OF IT!

ALEJANDRA!
MAMA! WHY DID YOU GO IN THERE!?!
COME OUT!!!
I DON'T WANT TO COME HERE, THIS IS WHERE ADAM RAISED ME!
I KNOW, MY DAUGHTER. I KNOW.
YOU SHOULD NEVER HAVE LIVED.
NOW EVEN THE SPIRIT OF VENGEANCE CANNOT HELP YOU!
WHAT--I DON'T--
OH I KNOW YOU'RE THE NEW GUY--BUT YOU CAN'T BE SPIDER-MAN UNTIL THE GREEN GOBLIN WELCOMES YOU TO TOWN, BOY!
OH GREAT!
NO TIME FOR FUN, JUST DROPPING OFF MY CITY-WARMING PRESENT.
I THINK IT BROKE IN SHIPPING THOUGH, I HEARD A SNAP.
WHAT-- NO! WHAT DID YOU--
BETTY!!! NO GOD, NO!!
I KNOW YOU'VE ALL MISSED ME. IT'S BEEN A WHILE.
HULK BUSTERS, SMASH M.O.D.O.K.!
I'VE SPENT MONTHS ALTERING MYSELF. PARTICULARLY MY "BRAIN BLAST" AS YOU CALLED IT.
NOT A PARTICLE BEAM ANYMORE, I USE IT TO NEUTRALIZE ENERGY.
SPECIFICALLY... GAMMA ENERGY.
HOW--?
FALL BACK!!!
AFTER THAT, I CAN GO LOW TECH.
BRAKKA BRAKKA BRAKKA BRAKKA
WE'LL LEAVE NOTHING BUT ASHES!
GAH-- GOING TO NEED A BATH TONIGHT.
X-23 TRIGGER SCENT SOLUTION
HELL, I'D RATHER GET HIT IN THE EYE WITH GASOLINE THAN THIS STUFF.
WHAT WERE THEY MAKING IN THAT...
SNIFF SNIFF
THE PHEROMONE! GET OUT NOW!!

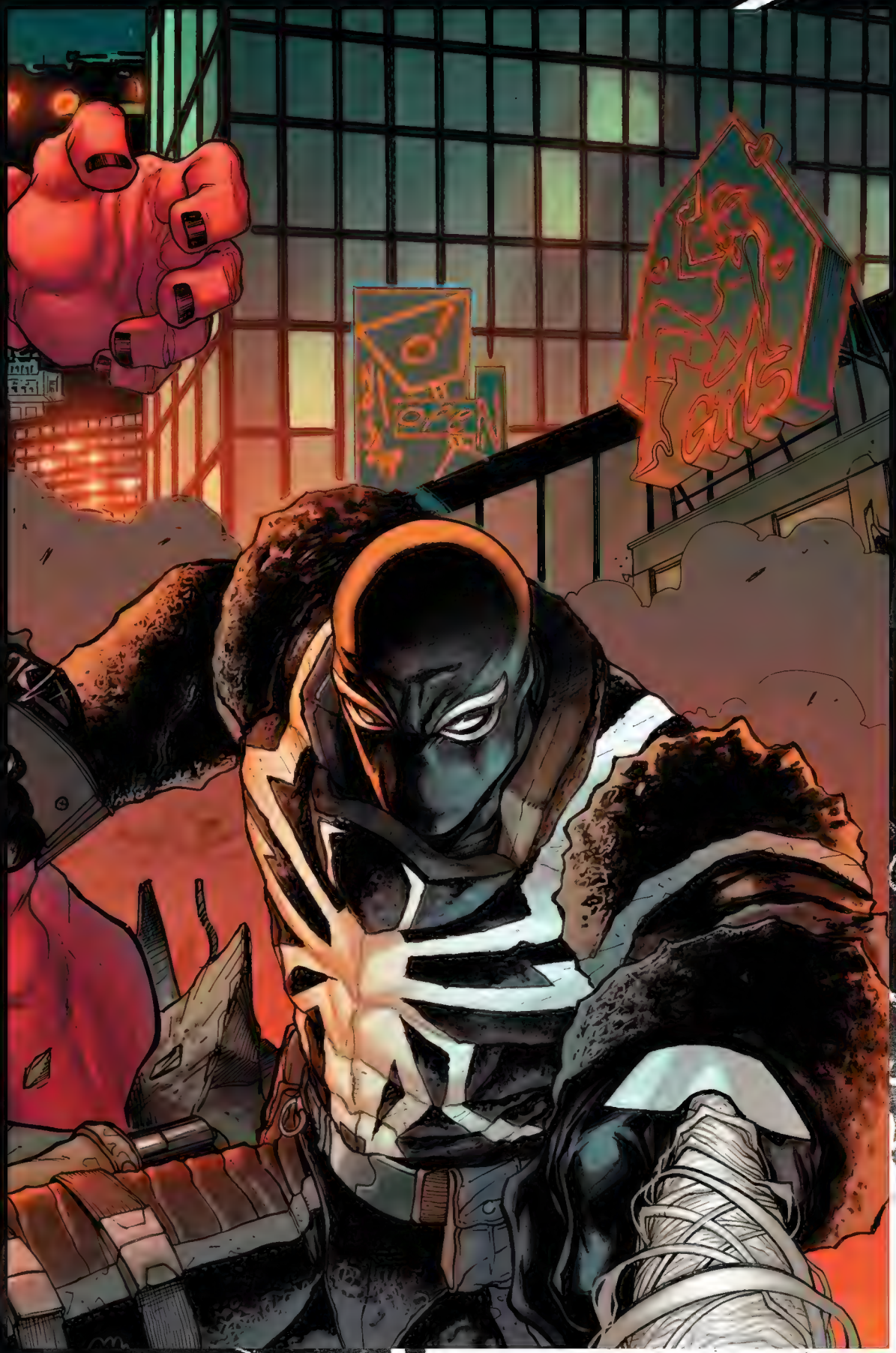
TRIED TO END YOU... BEFORE HE TOOK YOU FROM ME...
NO!!! NOT HERE!!!
LET ME OUT!!!
BETTY, HOW COULD-- YOU CAN'T BE--
I'LL KILL HIM. THEM.
KILL THEM ALL AND EAT THEIR HEAARTSSS.
DAUGHTER--
--I SENT YOU INTO THIS, I GOT YOU--
MAKE ME STOP!
MAKE ME STOP!!!
KILL ME!

AAAHHHH!!
BRING HER BACK! ANOTHER CHANCE!!!
WAIT...IT DIDN'T HAPPEN. IT DIDN'T.
CONTROL... NEED CONTROL...
WHY ARE YOU HERE? DID YOU DO THAT TO ME?!
YOU CAN'T BE HERE. YEARS PASSED!!
WHO DID THIS TO US?
THAT'S THE PART YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO ACCEPT.
YOU DID THAT TO YOURSELF.
BULL! WHO ARE YOU!?
SEE WHAT I MEAN?
THERE'S SOMEONE OVER HERE.
BECAUSE YOU LET THE INFERNAL BORDER SPREAD, YOU WERE ALREADY ON THE THRESHOLD.
THERE WAS ONLY ONE PLACE YOU COULD GO ONCE YOU DIED.
WELCOME TO HELL.
NOW MAYBE YOU KNOW WHERE YOU REALLY ARE.
WE WERE FIGHTING EVIL!
DOESN'T THAT GIVE US A PASS ON THIS PLACE?!

EVERYONE THINKS IT'S ALL FIRE PITS AND TORTURE, BUT WITHOUT YOUR OWN PERSONAL PARADISE FOR CONTRAST, HELL IS JUST ANOTHER HORRIBLE PLACE TO BE.
NOW EMOTIONAL TORTURE, RENDING OF THE SOUL...THAT'S WHERE IT'S AT!
THAT'S WHY IT'S BUILT TO MAKE THE EXPERIENCE EXTRA SPECIAL JUST FOR YOU.
WE DON'T DESERVE TO BE HERE!
YEAH WE DO.
BLAZE SPOKE OF YOU, MEPHISTO, KING OF HELL
YOU EACH HAVE EVEN HIGHER, GRANDER DREAMS, I CAN SENSE IT.
AND I CAN. TAKE YOU THERE. BUT I WARN YOU, EACH WILL UNRAVEL, WORSE THAN THE LAST.
WE... DIED?
AND WITH EACH, YOU'LL FALL EVEN FARTHER. FOR ETERNITY.

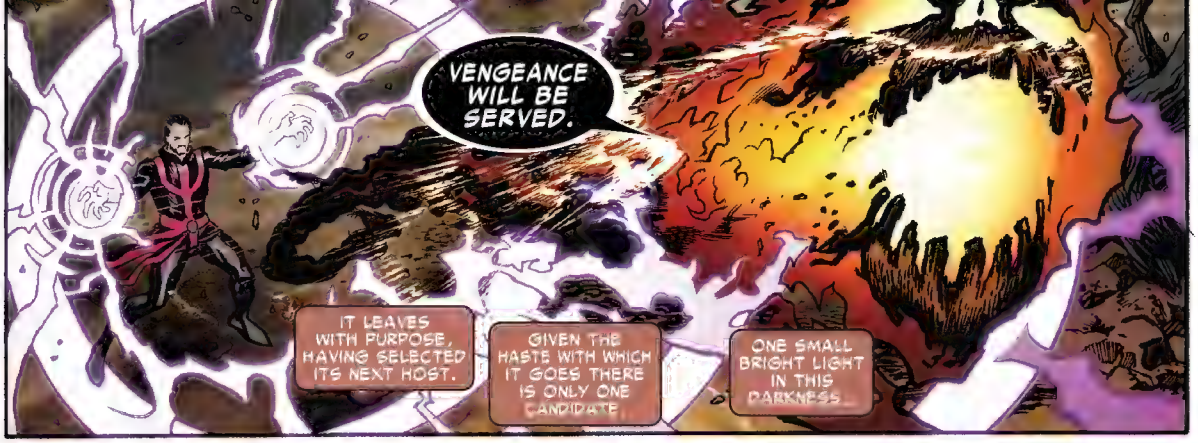
I WONDERED HOW MUCH LOWER I COULD GET.
WHAT REALLY BURNS ME, PARDON THE EXPRESSION, IS THAT THE NEW TERRITORY WAS BROKEN BY BLACKHEART.
HE IS YOUR COMPETITION?
THE WORST KIND. HE'S MY *SON*.
IT'S ALL ABOUT YOUR EGO.
OH HELL YES. IT "*WEREN'T MY IDEAR*," AS MR. THOMPSON MIGHT SAY.
I DON'T TALK LIKE THAT.
FORTUNATELY, I CAN EXPLOIT AN EXISTENTIAL LOOPHOLE. SEE, YOU TECHNICALLY SHOULDN'T BE ABLE TO *DIE* IN HELL. IN OTHER WORDS...
I CAN FIX IT IN POST.
NOW IS WHEN BLACKHEART IS MOST VULNERABLE TO YOU--HE THINKS HE ALREADY WON.
AGREE TO A CONDITION OF MINE AND YOU CAN BE BACK ON EARTH IMMEDIATELY, BEATING THE SNOT OUT OF THAT BOY.
A DAMNED CONTRACT! WHAT ARE YOU, A LAWYER?
NOW *THAT'S* A LOW BLOW.
I FOLLOW A UNIVERSAL CONSTANT. NOTHING WORTHWHILE IS FREE.
WHAT DO YOU WANT, OUR SOULS?

SIMPLE FOOLS--I ALREADY HAVE THAT. YOU ARE IN HELL.
YOU CAN NEVER ESCAPE, AND EVEN IF YOU COULD YOU'D HAVE NO BODIES IN THE LIVING WORLD.
ONLY I CAN GIVE YOU ALL THAT BACK--IF YOU JOIN ME IN AN ETERNAL COVENANT.
AT A LATER TIME, I WILL HAVE NEED OF YOU. AN IMPORTANT TASK.
YOU WILL COME TOGETHER AGAIN, AND DO WHAT I REQUIRE. THERE IS NO REFUSING ONCE WE HAVE MADE THIS PACT.
NOW.
DO I HAVE YOUR VOWS?
OR WILL I BE SEEING YOU AROUND UNTIL THE UNIVERSE IMPLODES IN HEAT DEATH?



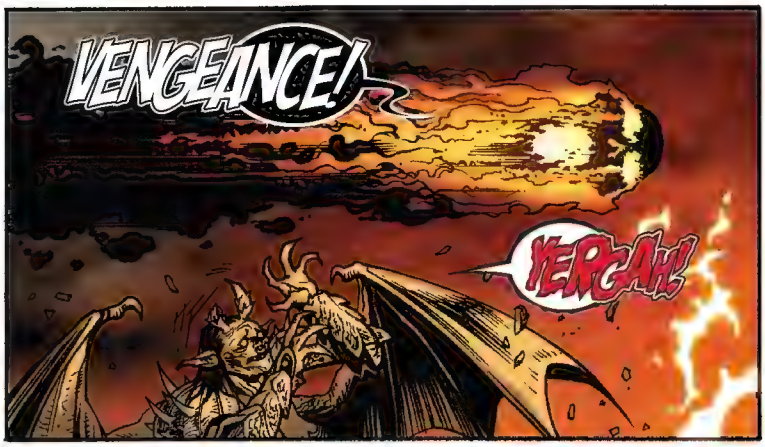
13.4

I WISH JERICHO DRUMM HAD SURVIVED TO SERVE AS SORCERER SUPREME.
IT WOULD'VE BEEN GOOD TO SEE HIM GROW INTO THE ROLE.
HE SHOULD STILL BE HERE.
MORE TO THE POINT...
...HE SHOULD BE THE ONE DEALING WITH THIS.
BY GORES OF FORGOTTEN GAL'LNA--BLACKHEART HAS DEFEATED THE GHOST RIDER!
NOT BLACKHEART, STEPHEN--THE INVERSION OF THE SPIRIT OF VENGEANCE'S VERY SOUL!
AND IT DESTROYED BLAZE'S AMULET!
YET WE REMAIN, HELLSTROM!
HEAR US, FESTERING CANKER OF HELL--YOU WILL NOT PREVAIL!
HOARY HOSTS OF HOGGOTH!
THE SPIRIT OF VENGEANCE IS FREE OF ITS HOST!
SSSTRRAANGGEE
HEAR ME NOW, SPIRIT! DO NOT BE TEMPTED TO FEED AT THIS TROUGH OF EVIL!
RETURN FROM WHENCE YOU CAME! YOU MAY NOT TAKE YOUR VENGEANCE IN THIS MANNER!
NOW! LEST THIS SEWER CORRUPT YOU FURTHER!
BEFORE YOU ARE MISUSED--BEFORE YOU BRING ABOUT THE DEMISE OF ALL MAN!


VENGEANCE WILL BE SERVED.
IT LEAVES WITH PURPOSE, HAVING SELECTED ITS NEXT HOST.
GIVEN THE HASTE WITH WHICH IT GOES THERE IS ONLY ONE CANDIDATE
ONE SMALL BRIGHT LIGHT IN THIS DARKNESS

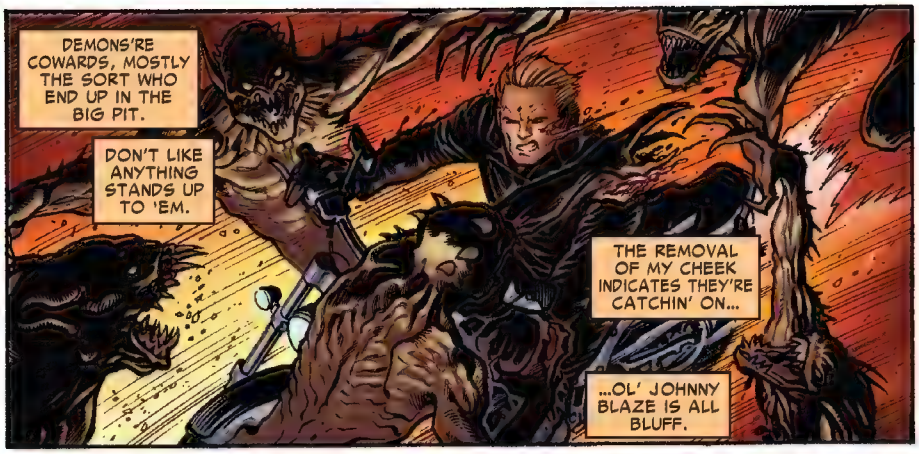
...THE SPIRIT OF VENGEANCE RETURNS TO JOHNNY BLAZE.
DID IT... KILLED THE WHORE RIDER, DESTROYED THE AMULET-- HELL SPREADS UNABATED.
THE OLD MAN'LL BE REVVED UP FOR GARI OYLE APPRECIATION TIME FOR SURE.

COULD USE SOME PARTY ACTION AFTER THE TURKEY TODAY'S TURNED INTO.
C'MON! GET UP, YOU MESS. GET UP OR--


VENGEANCE!
YERGAH!

WELL, TICKLE MY TAIL...
...GUESS APPRECIATION TIME'S GETTING PUSHED BACK.

A BODY CAN HOLD BACK DEMONS WITH A CERTAIN DEGREE OF GUTS.


DEMONS'RE COWARDS, MOSTLY THE SORT WHO END UP IN THE BIG PIT.
DON'T LIKE ANYTHING STANDS UP TO 'EM.
THE REMOVAL OF MY CHEEK INDICATES THEY'RE CATCHIN' ON...
...OL' JOHNNY BLAZE IS ALL BLUFF.

BLAZE.
SPIRIT'S LOOKIN' FOR A HOST.
ALEJANDRA'S DEAD.
AND AFTER THE LOW DOWN DEBACLE THAT GIRL CREATED-- AIN'T GONNA LET IT INTO THE HANDS OF ANOTHER...

...C'MON THEN, I'LL BE THE DAMNED GHOST RIDER.
SORRY, PUMPKIN'.
I BRING THIS BACK TO DADDY, HE'LL GIVE ME A BIG REWARD.

AND GARI OYLE LIKES HER REWARDS "BIG," IF YOU DIG.

HOPE YOU DO TOO-- HELL'S INMATES ARE ABOUT TA GIVE YOU A BIG ONE, BLAZE!
NO!

THAT BLAZE... HANDSOME FOR A MONKEY.
HOW GOES THE CONVERGENCE?
DAIMON AND STRANGE ARE ALL THAT HOLD US BACK.
DAIMON IS STRUGGLING.
WE ARE CHILDREN OF DEVILS. HIS HEART DESIRES THIS AS MUCH AS MINE.
LOOK WHAT YER BEST GAL FOUND FOR YA, STINKER.
BY BELIAL'S LIE--THE SPIRIT OF VENGEANCE!
I SHOULD GUT YOU--FEED MY EVIL INTO YOUR HEART--
Y-YEAH ≥CHOKE≤ LATER, BABY ≥KOFF≤ PARTY LATER...
YES. I MUST PREPARE.
WITH THIS VILE FIEND IN MY HANDS...

"...NOTHING OF EARTH CAN STOP BLACKHEART."
...THE MAIN STRIP WAS MOVED YEARS LATER.
THOUGH THE NEW LAS VEGAS STRIP BECAME A WORLD-RENOWNED VACATION DESTINATION, MANY CONSIDERED IT SOULLESS.
A CORPORATE MOSAIC OF CANDY-COLORED SUBLIMINAL MESSAGES, CRUSTED IN DAZZLING NEON, DESIGNED TO INEBRIATE AND BILK THE VERY STUPID.
HOLY BIB
I HOPE YOU'VE ENJOYED YOUR TOUR.
WATCH YOUR STEP.
A-ARE WE DEAD?
WHAT DOES IT MATTER? THE SPIRIT OF VENGEANCE HAS LEFT ME.
THERE IS NO HOPE FOR THE LIKES OF YOU.
"THE LIKES OF US" MAYBE FEEL LIKE GIVING IT THE OLD COLLEGE TRY.
WE'LL SEE HOW FAR YOUR OPTIMISTIC ATTITUDE GETS YOU IN HELL, FOOL.
HERE, YOUR FEARS ARE REAL.
MY BIGGEST FEAR RIGHT NOW IS BEING SADDLED WITH A LOSER WHO'S ALREADY QUIT.
AGREE.

WE LACK THE FORTITUDE TO WREST THIS WORLD BACK FROM BLACKHEART'S THORNY HANDS.
I SENSE IT IS WORSE THAN IT WAS.
MUCH WORSE.
BLACKHEART HAS THE SPIRIT OF VENGEANCE.
OUR TORMENT IS YOUR OPTIMISM. ENDLESSLY TRYING AND FAILING. CAN'T YOU SEE?
WE'LL DIE AGAIN AND AGAIN FOR ETERNITY!
WHILE I TRAPPED JOHNNY BLAZE IN THE DOORWAY TO IT ALL--
BLAZE?! BLAZE IS HERE?!
YOU ARE THE FAILED EXCREMENT OF CARBON PAPER.
AND YOUR PARENTS DIDN'T WANT YOU.
AND YOUR UNBORN CHILDREN LIE COLD IN PURGATORY, SINNER.
BETRAY THESE STRANGERS, ROSS. BEFORE THIS CYCLE CONTINUES.
WE'RE ON EARTH--BASIC RULES OF PHYSICS STILL APPLY--KILL ANYTHING IN OUR WAY.
YERAGHH!
SHNKK
HACK-HACK AND SLICE-SLICE!
PUPPET SOUL COOKED IN A PIMP'S TOILET!

WE DIED.
SHINK
NOW WE HAVE BEEN GIVEN A SECOND CHANCE--
MAYBE THIS TIME WE SHOULD WORK TOGETHER?
KLOOM
TEAMWORK IS WORTH A TRY.
COMING FROM SURLY SALLY WHO ABANDONED US IN THE MIDDLE OF OUR LAST LAST STAND?
NOTHING PERSONAL. I WAS TRAINED TO WORK SOLO.
JUST AS I'M SURE SERVING THE SPIRIT OF VENGEANCE IS IN ALEJANDRA'S BLOOD.
IT MUST HAVE CHOSEN HER FOR A REASON.
IF JOHNNY BLAZE IS HERE, MAYBE HE CAN HELP HER GET IT BACK?
WANT IN ON THE TEAMWORK BUILDING EXERCISE CAMP, ALEJANDRA?
START WITH YOU TELLING US WHAT THE HELL HAPPENED HERE.
YES, PERHAPS THE TRUTH WILL SAVE US THIS NEW SPIRIT OF FUTILE CAMARADERIE.

Later...
...SO, YES, I THOUGHT I WAS STOPPING BLACKHEART FROM BRINGING HELL TO EARTH--
AND IN DOING SO INADVERTENTLY UNLOCKED THE DEMONIC CENTRIFUGE, SETTING IT ALL IN MOTION.
SOLVES THAT, WE GET THE SPIRIT OF VENGEANCE BACK TO BLAZE...CLEARLY IT NEVER SHOULD HAVE LEFT HIM.
IT'S NOT A FRIVOLOUS GIRL SWAYING ON WHIMS--THE SPIRIT OF VENGEANCE CHOOSES ITS HOST CAREFULLY.
BASED ON THAT STORY--I WOULD SAY IT MADE A MISTAKE.
YOU SEE--WORKING TOGETHER OR NOT--THERE'S *NO HOPE.*
THIS THING ISN'T OVER.
CLEARLY NO ONE ELSE CAN GET IN HERE TO HELP--SO IT'S ON US.
I'VE HAD ENOUGH OF THE TEETH-GNASHING AND THE AGONIZING.
WE DO THIS *TOGETHER* OR WE LANGUISH IN HELL *ALONE.*
SHOW OF HANDS, RIGHT NOW, WHO'S GONNA MAKE THE SHOW?
IN OR OUT?

ARMY ATTITUDE, SON.
LET'S SINK THESE SONS OF BITCHES BACK INTO THE GROUND.
I SWEAR, YOU TWO ARE JUST A HAIR AWAY FROM KISSING EACH OTHER.
DON'T ASK, DON'T TELL.
HOLD YOUR GROUND!
BY VISHANTI'S BETRAYAL--SHOULD WE FAIL--ALL IS LOST!
HOW LONG CAN WE DO THIS, STEPHEN?!
H-HOW LONG CAN WE POSSIBLY HOLD BACK ALL OF HELL?!
WHY DO YOU STRUGGLE TO STOP IT AT ALL, DAIMON?
WE ARE BROTHERS, YOU AND I.

YOU ARE NO TRUE SON OF HELL! YOU'RE A GOOD MAN--YOU WILL NOT FAIL!
STRANGE IS WRONG.
FABRICATING REASSURANCE HE KNOWS YOU CANNOT GIVE.
YOU STRUGGLE AGAINST THE WILL OF YOUR HOME, SOURCE OF YOUR STRENGTH.
THIS IS OUR FATE.
DAIMON?! WHATEVER IS HAPPENING, WHATEVER HELL IS PROMISING YOU--IT IS A LIE!
THINK--WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU DO STOP IT?
OUR FATHERS RULE HELL.
FOREVER A PRISON ARMPIT FOR MORTAL MISBEHAVERS.
WE CONTINUE TO STUMBLE ABOUT ON EARTH, AIMLESSLY, POINTLESSLY...
IS THAT NOT YOUR IDEA OF HELL?
THIS HOUR WILL ETERNALLY DEFINE YOU! DO YOU HEAR ME?!
TAKE YOUR SHARE OF THE KINGDOM.
IN THE FEAST OF SOULS.
OUR FATHERS HAVE EATEN. GORGED ON THE FRUITS OF THIS PLANE.
NOW IS OUR TIME.
LOWER YOUR TRIDENT. EMBRACE YOUR FATE.
IT'S SO SIMPLE.

DAIMON--
NO!
WAS THERE EVER ANY DOUBT, STEPHEN?
I TRUSTED YOU--! LIFT YOUR TRIDENT! HOLD THE--
YHERGH!
GHRAGGH!
YOU ARE THE MOST GLORIOUS DOLT, STRANGE.
YOU PUT YOUR FAITH IN A SON OF SATAN TO STOP THE TIDES OF HELL.
YOUR TIME TRULY HAS PASSED, OLD MAGE.
THERE IS NO NEED TO MOCK YOU...
...YOUR FAILURE'S WEIGHT WILL SOON BE CLEAR ENOUGH.
THE CHILL OF THIS PLACE RUNS TO MY CORE.
I REGRETTED ACCEPTING THE SOLO MISSION AS SOON AS I TOOK IT.

MAKE IT QUICK.
FIND BLAZE.
TELL HIM TO SPIN IN THE OTHER DIRECTION.
SUCK HELL BACK DOWN.
BLOW UP THE CENTRIFUGE BEFORE IT CAN TAKE EARTH DOWN WITH IT.
SNIKT
IT SOUNDED SIMPLE WHEN WE CAME UP WITH IT.
BUT FACED WITH ACTUALLY DOING IT... I AM NOT SO SURE.
AFTER ALL, MY FAILURE WOULD ONLY MEAN EVERYTHING IN THE *WORLD* BEING SUCKED INTO HELL.
NO PRESSURE.

DEAR GOD...
H-HELP... ME...CAN'T HOLD ON--
"--CAN'T HOLD ON ANOTHER SECOND."
SO, LIKE, THIS THING WOULD CREATE AN ANTITHESIS OF ANYONE?
WONDER WHAT IT'D MAKE OF ME. SOME NICE HOUSEWIFE WHO COULD BAKE YOU COOKIES AND GIVE YOU CHERUBS TA HUG AN' KISS?
BE SILENT.
WHAT I AM ATTEMPTING--VERY DANGEROUS.
NO TRUE SON OF HELL HAS BONDED WITH THE SPIRIT OF VENGEANCE.
IF A MISTAKE IS MADE, THE RAW ENERGY RELEASED WOULD DECIMATE FOUR PARALLEL UNIVERSES.
AND THAT'S THE TYPE OF SOUL FEAST I'D PREFER TO RESERVE FOR--

KRASHSH
C'MON, PUNK!
KA-BOOM
DEVIL SPAWN--
MEET GRIZZLED OLD SON OF A BITCH!
KWOOOOM
YHEGAHGAH!
SHLKK

GAKK-AKK--!
YOU RUN AROUND TRYING TO MAINTAIN ORDER IN THE MIDST OF ALL OF THIS HEART-CRUSHING TERROR.
BECAUSE YOUR PETITE INTELLECT CANNOT GRASP THE TRUE INSIGNIFICANCE OF ITSELF.
YOUR EGOS ARE SO DISPROPORTIONATE TO THE ACTUAL VALUE OF THE "LIFE" THEY REPRESENT.
THERE EXISTS AN ENTIRE DIMENSION DEDICATED TO FEEDING ON THE MISDEEDS PERFORMED IN YOUR VERY SHORT LIVES.
KRAAAH
HELL'S PROLIFERATION IS A BYPRODUCT OF YOUR SIN!

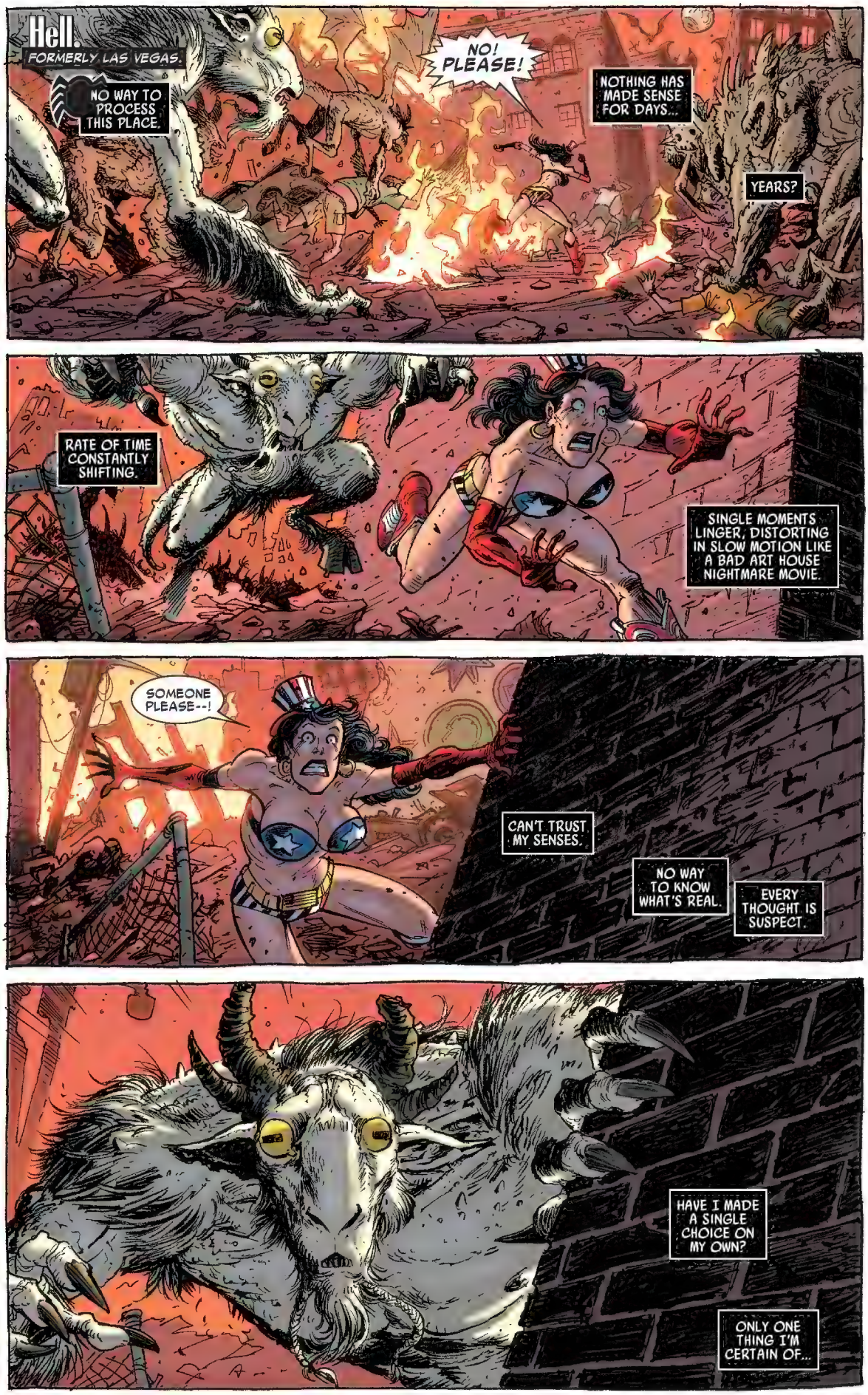
WE SHOUT A MIGHTY BATTLE CRY.
I HEAR THE WORDS--
--I HELP SAY THEM--
--BUT THEY COME OUT BROKEN.
GWATHOOOOM
HULK SHOULD BE GRABBING THE SPIRIT OF VENGEANCE NOW.
INSTEAD HE SITS.
TRANSFIXED ON SOMETHING A MILLION MILES AWAY.
I GET IT TOO.
WE'RE SOAKING IN PURE HELL.
IT AFFECTS EVERY SINGLE THOUGHT.
EVERY SINGLE SENSATION.
EVERY SINGLE BETRAAAYAL.
EEVERY SINGGLE MURRDER!
WE AM LLOVE MMURDER!
MMURDER THE BETTRAYORR!
THAT PLEASURE IS RESERVED FOR ME.

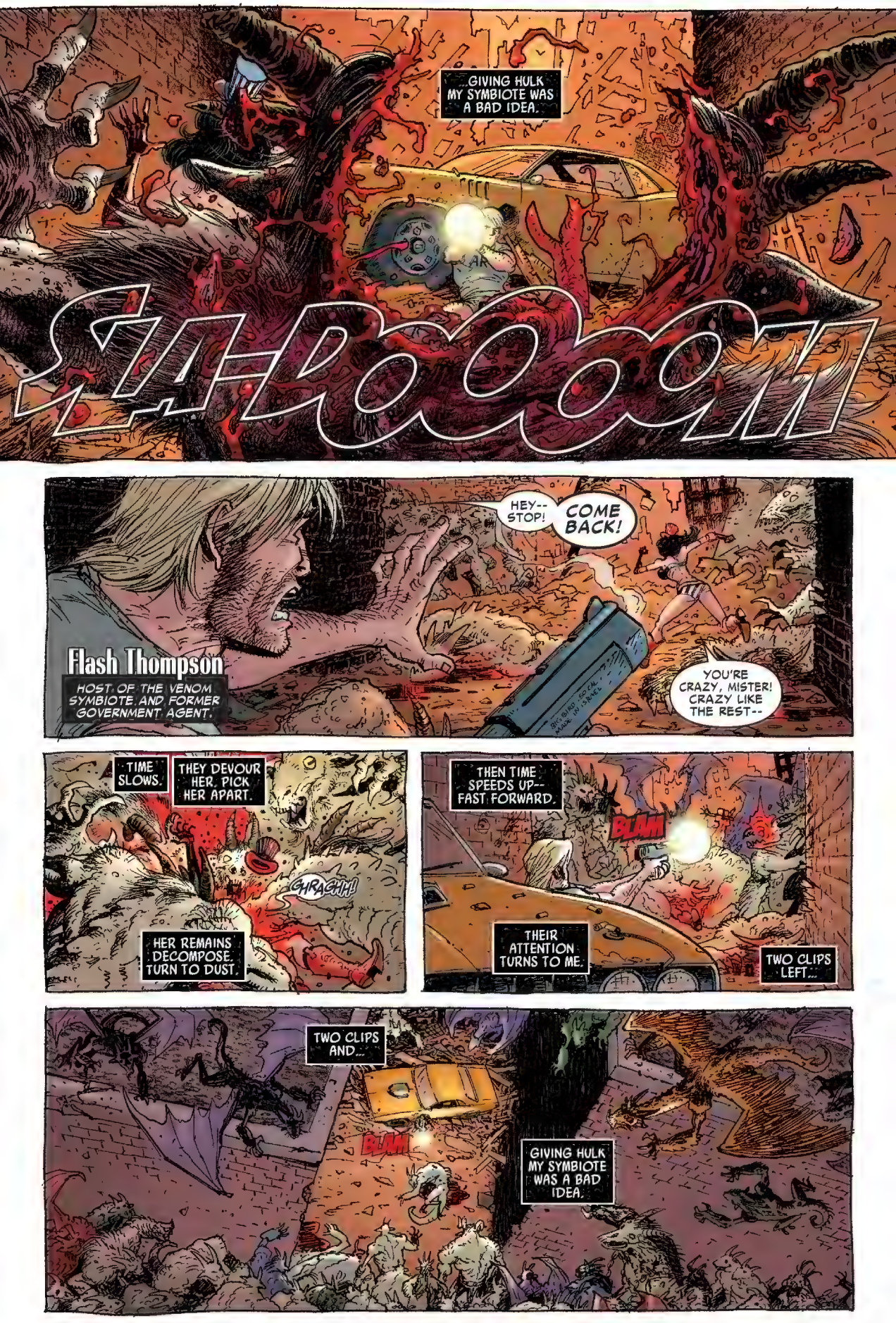
STOP--I'LL SHATTER IT! GOD KNOWS WHERE IT'LL GO!
WWE AMM...LOSSING CONTROL, ALEJANDRA!
GIVVE TO USS--THHE PLANN!
#&!% THE PLAN.
THWIPP
NOWW POWWER AMM OURSS!
BLACKHEART HITTING THE KID WITH SOME OF HIS BAD BUSINESS
GET UP--FATE OF THE WORLD ON THE LINE--
HERE'S SOME BACK!
KA-BOOM

AALL FFORR LISS...ALL FFORREVERR...
YOU MISUNDERSTAND.
IN HELL IT'S YOUR DESIRES THAT HURT YOU.
YOU WANT FOR EVERYTHING...
...YOU GET NOTHING.
YOUR FRIENDS DON'T WANT TO SEE THE SPIRIT OF VENGEANCE RETURNED TO YOU.
MY OFFER STILL STANDS, ALEJANDRA. ALL YOU DESIRE. YOU CAN BE MY GHOST RIDER.
JUST TELL ME THEIR PLANS.

THEY WENT TO REVERSE THE CENTRIFUGE...TO SEND HELL BACK DOWN.
GARI--GO.
KILL ALL YOU FIND.
AH, MORTALS. SO MANY SCHEMES.
I TRULY LOVE TORMENTING YOU!
WHAT--!
I AM BLACKHEART! THE EMPEROR OF ANGUISH!
LOOK AT ME NOW, FATHER, LOOK AT WHAT I HAVE BECOME!
LOOK AT MY--
WELL, I'LL BE DAMNED...

"...THEY'VE ACTUALLY SURPRISED ME."
WWE AM 5MMA6HH FOR VENGGEANCE.


Hell.
FORMERLY LAS VEGAS.
NO WAY TO PROCESS THIS PLACE.
NO! PLEASE!
NOTHING HAS MADE SENSE FOR DAYS...
YEARS?
RATE OF TIME CONSTANTLY SHIFTING.
SINGLE MOMENTS LINGER, DISTORTING IN SLOW MOTION LIKE A BAD ART HOUSE NIGHTMARE MOVIE.
SOMEONE PLEASE--!
CAN'T TRUST MY SENSES.
NO WAY TO KNOW WHAT'S REAL.
EVERY THOUGHT IS SUSPECT.
HAVE I MADE A SINGLE CHOICE ON MY OWN?
ONLY ONE THING I'M CERTAIN OF...


GIVING HULK MY SYMBIOTE WAS A BAD IDEA.
SLAROOM!
HEY-- STOP!
COME BACK!
Flash Thompson
HOST OF THE VENOM SYMBIOTE AND FORMER GOVERNMENT AGENT.
YOU'RE CRAZY, MISTER! CRAZY LIKE THE REST--
TIME SLOWS.
THEY DEVOUR HER. PICK HER APART.
CHRACHH!
HER REMAINS DECOMPOSE. TURN TO DUST.
THEN TIME SPEEDS UP-- FAST FORWARD.
BLAM
THEIR ATTENTION TURNS TO ME.
TWO CLIPS LEFT...
TWO CLIPS AND...
BLAM
GIVING HULK MY SYMBIOTE WAS A BAD IDEA.

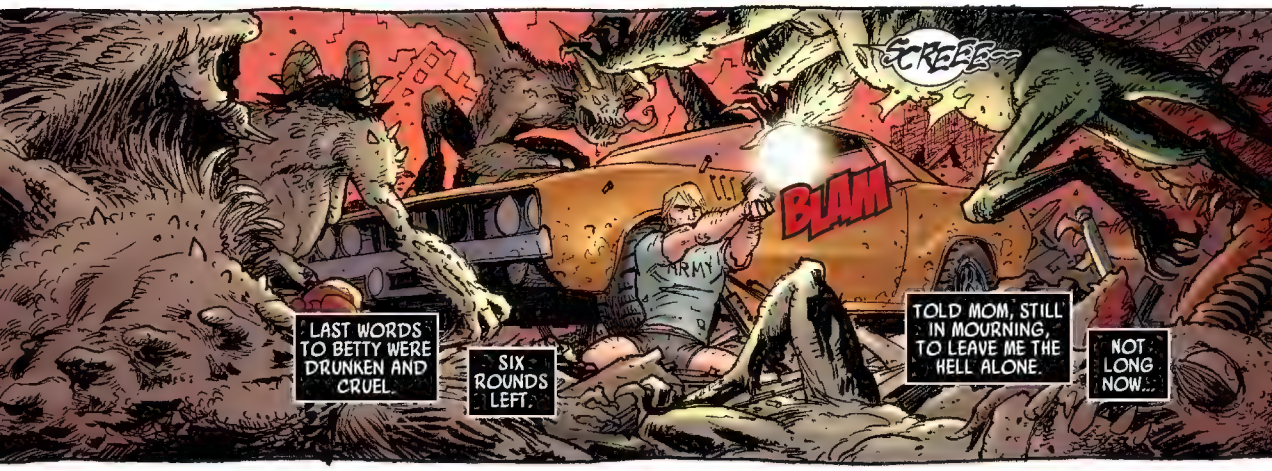
Tower Blackheart.
WWE AMM SMMASHH FFOR VENGEANNCE!
GRADOOOM
CRAFTY MONKEY.
GIVING THE HULK MY SYMBIOTE WAS A BAD IDEA.
SO YOU'VE COMBINED, BUT WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO ACCOMPLISH?
HELL'S HATRED FUELS ME-- GAKK!
THWIPP
WWE DESIRE ONE THINNG.
SKREEEEEE
VENGEANCE.

FEEL OURR RENANCE RUNCH RUNKK!

The Centrifuge.
X-23
FORMER ASSASSIN.
BLAZE! WHEN I SAY TURN, YOU TURN AND RIDE IN THE OTHER DIRECTION!
YOU ARE GOING TO SUCK HELL BACK DOWN AND THEN I AM GOING TO BLOW THIS DOORWAY APART.
C-CAN'T K-KEEP THIS UP--MUCH LONGER, GIRL!
YOU DAMN WELL BETTER BE RIGHT!
Johnny Blaze
FORMER HOST OF THE SPIRIT OF VENGEANCE.
I SHOULD NOT TELL HIM THIS IS A DICE TOSS.
NEED HIM TO BE CONFIDENT.
NEED HIM TO RETAIN HOPE...
...EVEN AS MINE VANISHES.
HEYA, SUGAR.
YEERAGH!
CLAWS SHRED FLESH FROM BONE.
SEVERED TENDONS...
MY REACTION IS MUD.
OH, BABY, LOOK AT THOSE BLADES--SEXY AND DANGEROUS.
YOU KNOW, WE GARGOYLES ARE VERSED IN BLACK MAGIC.

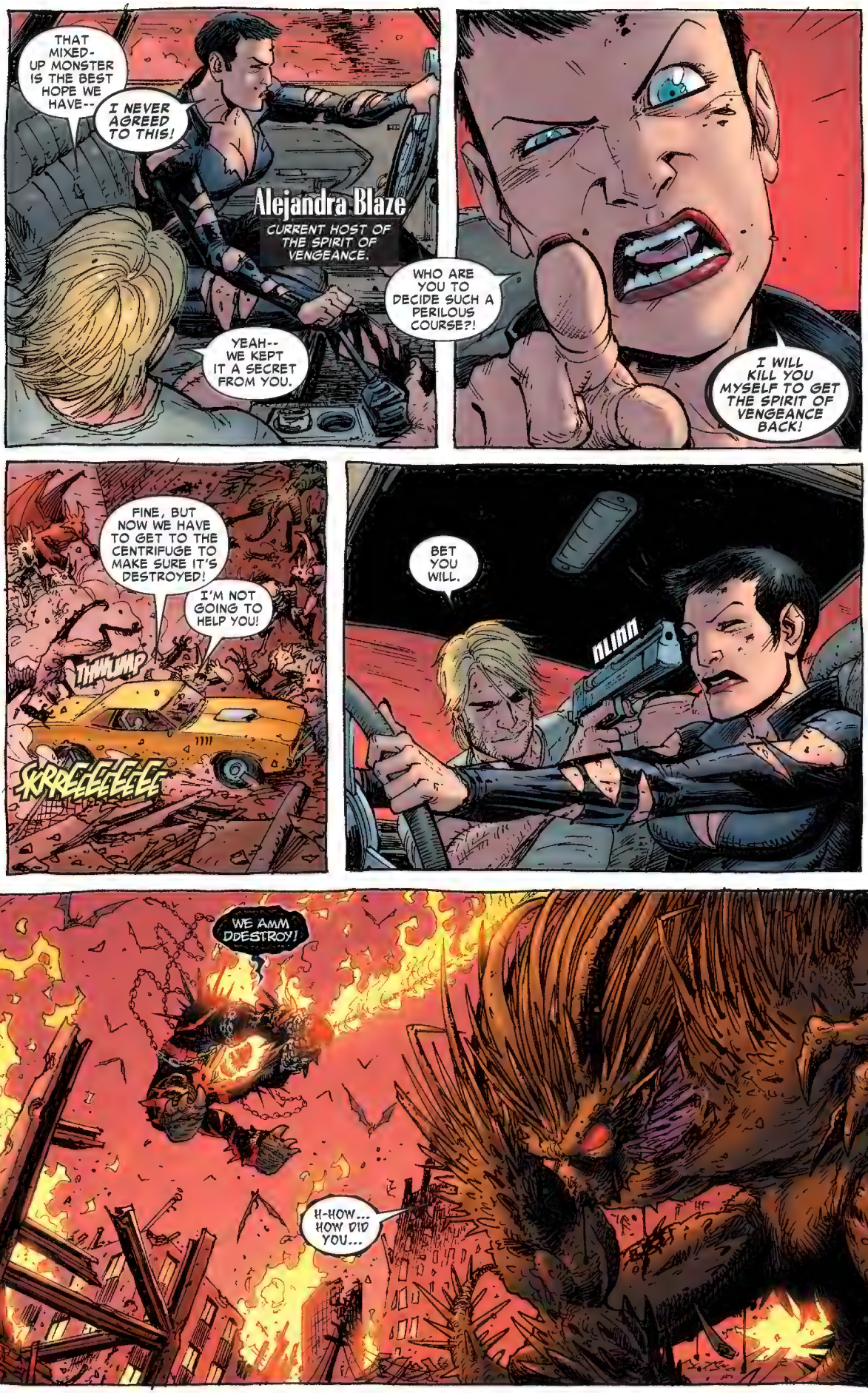
ALCHEMY FOR EXAMPLE.
MOST METALS TURN TO COPPER DUST SILLY EASY.

NOW...
...HOW 'BOUT A TASTE OF YOUR OWN MEDICINE.

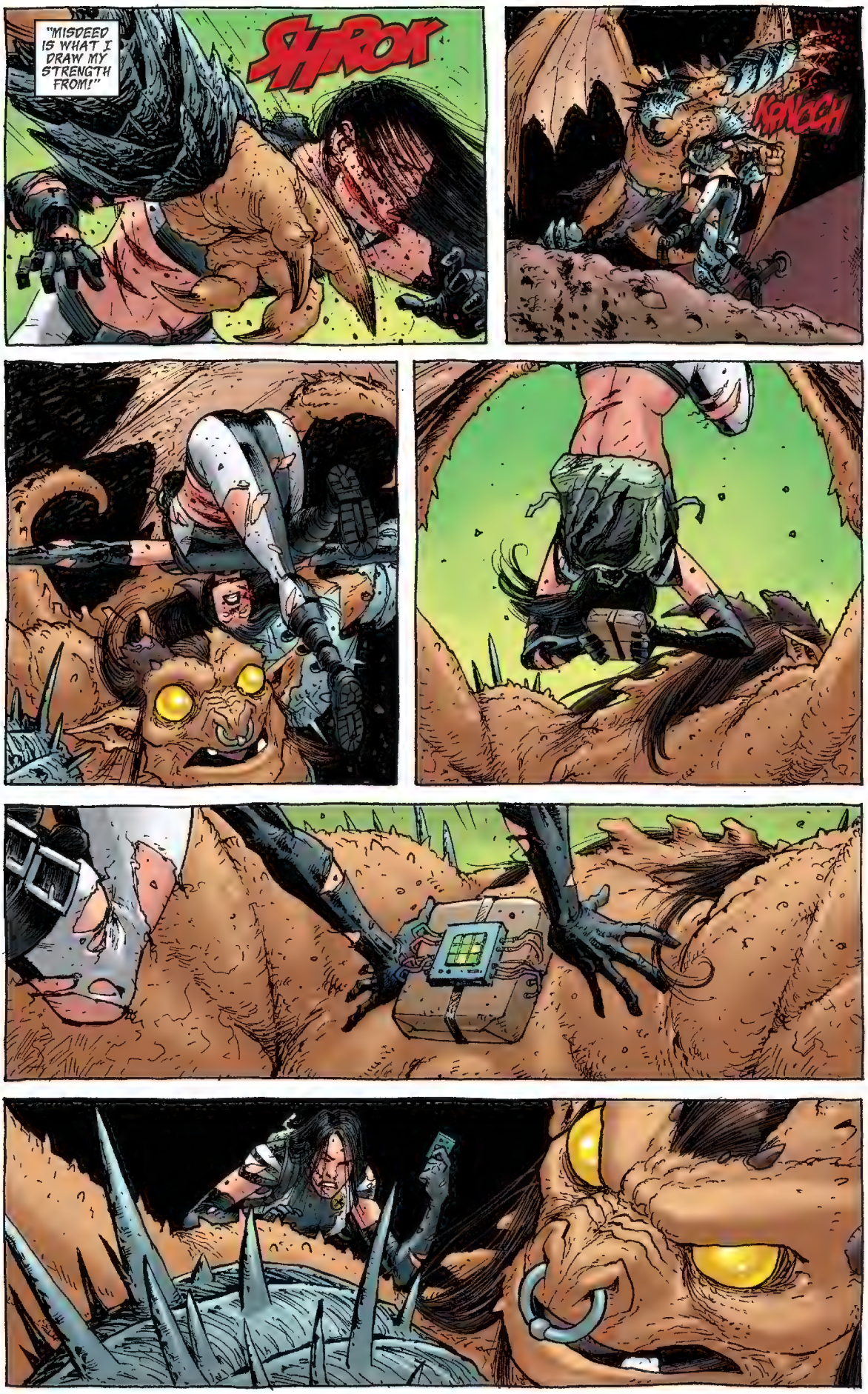

SCREE--
BLAM
LAST WORDS TO BETTY WERE DRUNKEN AND CRUEL.
SIX ROUNDS LEFT.
TOLD MOM, STILL IN MOURNING, TO LEAVE ME THE HELL ALONE.
NOT LONG NOW...

...GET WHAT I HAVE COMING.
C'MON, STUMPY--

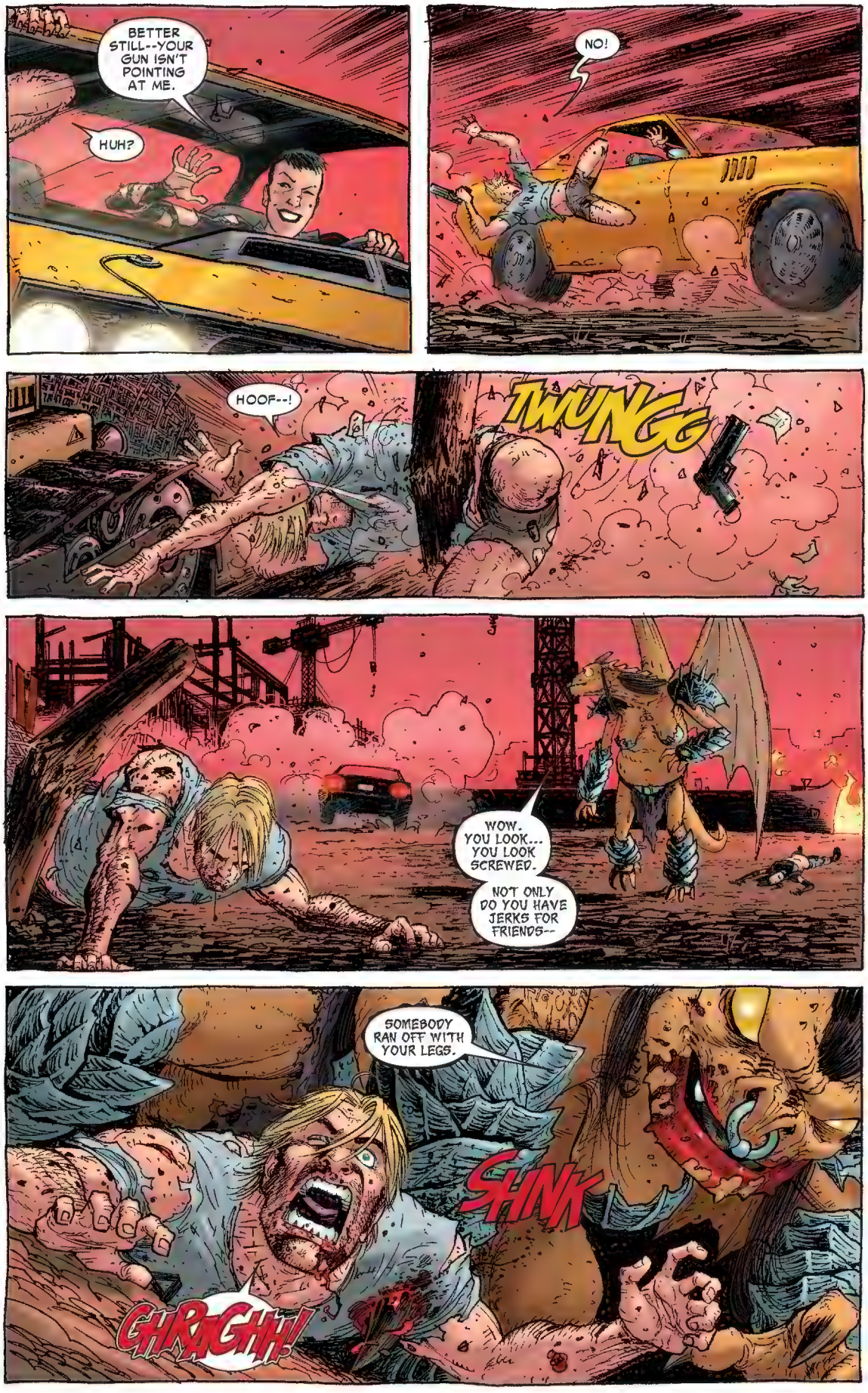
YOU'RE GONNA HELP ME GET THE SPIRIT OF VENGEANCE BACK.
VROOOOM


THAT MIXED-UP MONSTER IS THE BEST HOPE WE HAVE--
I NEVER AGREED TO THIS!
Alejandra Blaze
CURRENT HOST OF THE SPIRIT OF VENGEANCE.
YEAH-- WE KEPT IT A SECRET FROM YOU.
WHO ARE YOU TO DECIDE SUCH A PERILOUS COURSE?!
I WILL KILL YOU MYSELF TO GET THE SPIRIT OF VENGEANCE BACK!
FINE, BUT NOW WE HAVE TO GET TO THE CENTRIFUGE TO MAKE SURE IT'S DESTROYED!
I'M NOT GOING TO HELP YOU!
THWUMP
SKRREEEEEEEE
BET YOU WILL.
BLAM
WE AMM DDESTROY!
H-HOW... HOW DID YOU...

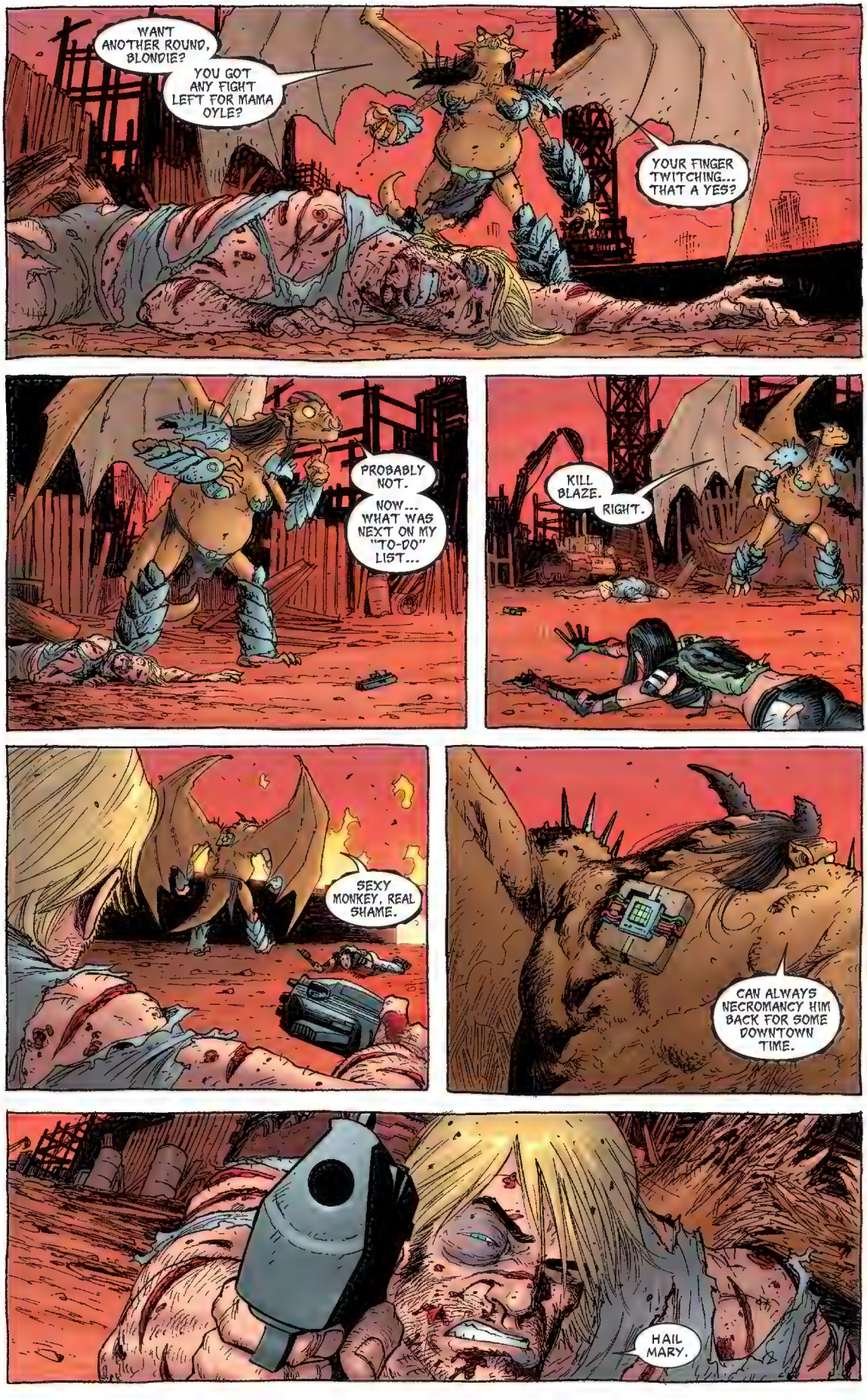
KRAKOOOM
SUFFERR NNOW--
OURR RPENANCE STARE!
FOOL!
KRRROKK
THE PENANCE STARE MAKES A MIND RELIVE ALL MISDEEDS AT ONCE.


"MISDEED IS WHAT I DRAW MY STRENGTH FROM!"
SHROK
KAVOOCH

TWOKK
YERAGHGH!
SCHOMPP
BRADOOM
BLAM
BLAM BLAM
GHRA--!
PNG
SKN
PNG
YOU'RE A FAIR SHOT.
BLAM
THANKS.
DOOR

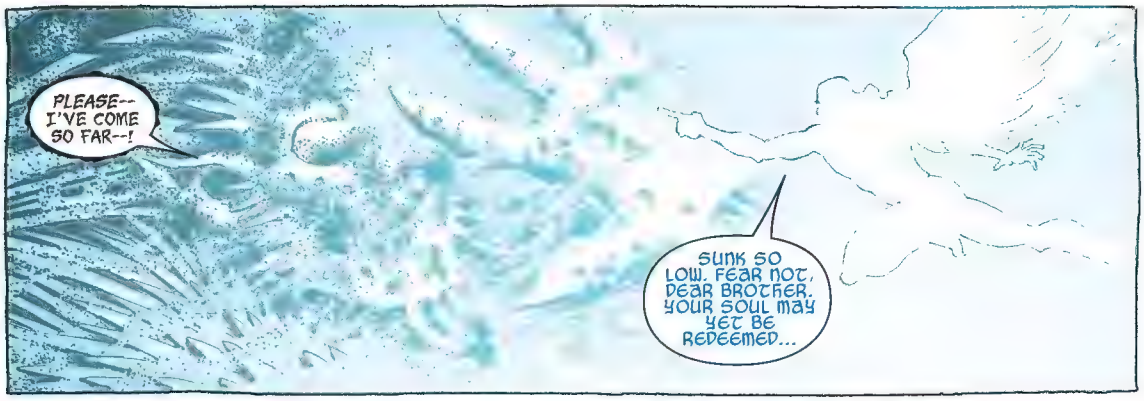

BETTER STILL--YOUR GUN ISN'T POINTING AT ME.
HUH?
NO!
HOOF--!
TWUNGG
WOW. YOU LOOK... YOU LOOK SCREWED.
NOT ONLY DO YOU HAVE JERKS FOR FRIENDS--
SOMEBODY RAN OFF WITH YOUR LEGS.
SHNK
GHRAGHH!

RUN, LITTLE SPIRIT, RUN--YOU WILL NOURISH MY HATE!
SCREEEE
FAST...
KRROOOOOM
NOT FAST ENOUGH.
KRAWTOOOOOM

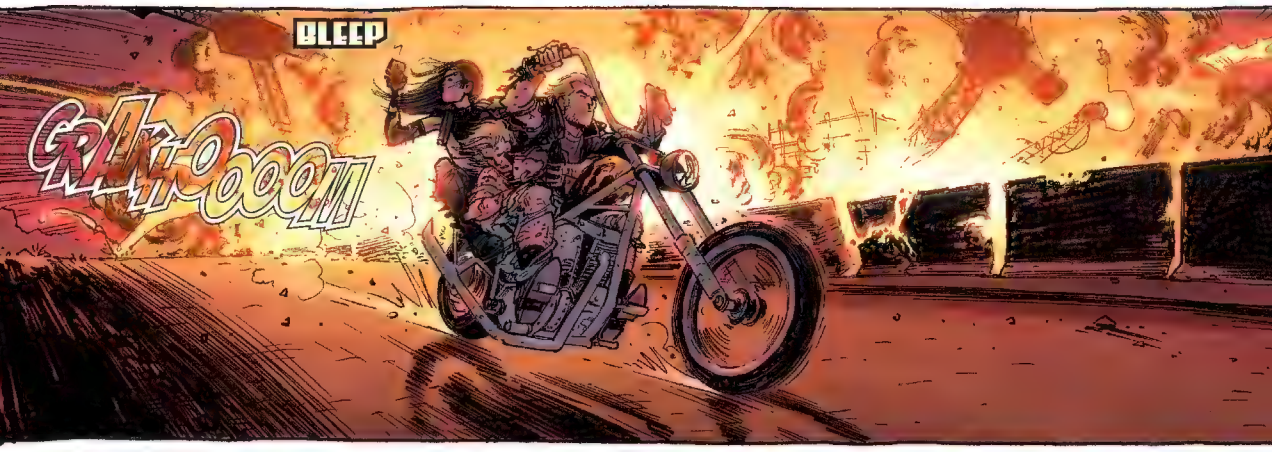

WANT ANOTHER ROUND, BLONDIE?
YOU GOT ANY FIGHT LEFT FOR MAMA OYLE?
YOUR FINGER TWITCHING... THAT A YES?
PROBABLY NOT.
NOW... WHAT WAS NEXT ON MY "TO-DO" LIST...
KILL BLAZE.
RIGHT.
SEXY MONKEY, REAL SHAME.
CAN ALWAYS NECROMANCY HIM BACK FOR SOME DOWNTOWN TIME.
HAIL MARY.

BLAM
GADOOOM
NICE TEAMWORK.
HELL HAS SPREAD--TAKEN OVER THE WEST COAST, I CAN TASTE THE SUFFERING.
ONCE I INGEST YOUR LITTLE SPIRIT OF VENGEANCE I WILL BE STRONG ENOUGH TO STORM HELL.
STRONG ENOUGH TO CRUSH MEPHISTO UNDER MY--WHAT'S THIS?
H'ELIAN'S MIRROR CAULDRON, STEAL NOW THE IMPRESSION OF THIS SOUL'S TRUE FORM.
TWISST IT.
INNVERRT IT.
WWE FOUNDD YYOURR MIRRORR.

NO!
I HAVE NO ANTITHESIS!
BUT YOU DO, MY CHILD.
LET ME HEAL YOUR SQUALID SOUL.
BLAZE! DO IT NOW!
GO THE OTHER WAY!
YOU GOT IT, AMIGO...
SKREEEE
"...FLUSH THIS MUCK BACK DOWN THE BIG DRAIN."


PLEASE-- I'VE COME SO FAR--!
SUNK SO LOW. FEAR NOT, DEAR BROTHER. YOUR SOUL MAY YET BE REDEEMED...

...STEP INTO THE LIGHT.


BLEEP
VROOOOM

HE'S GONE.
YOU'VE STOLEN WHAT IS MINE.

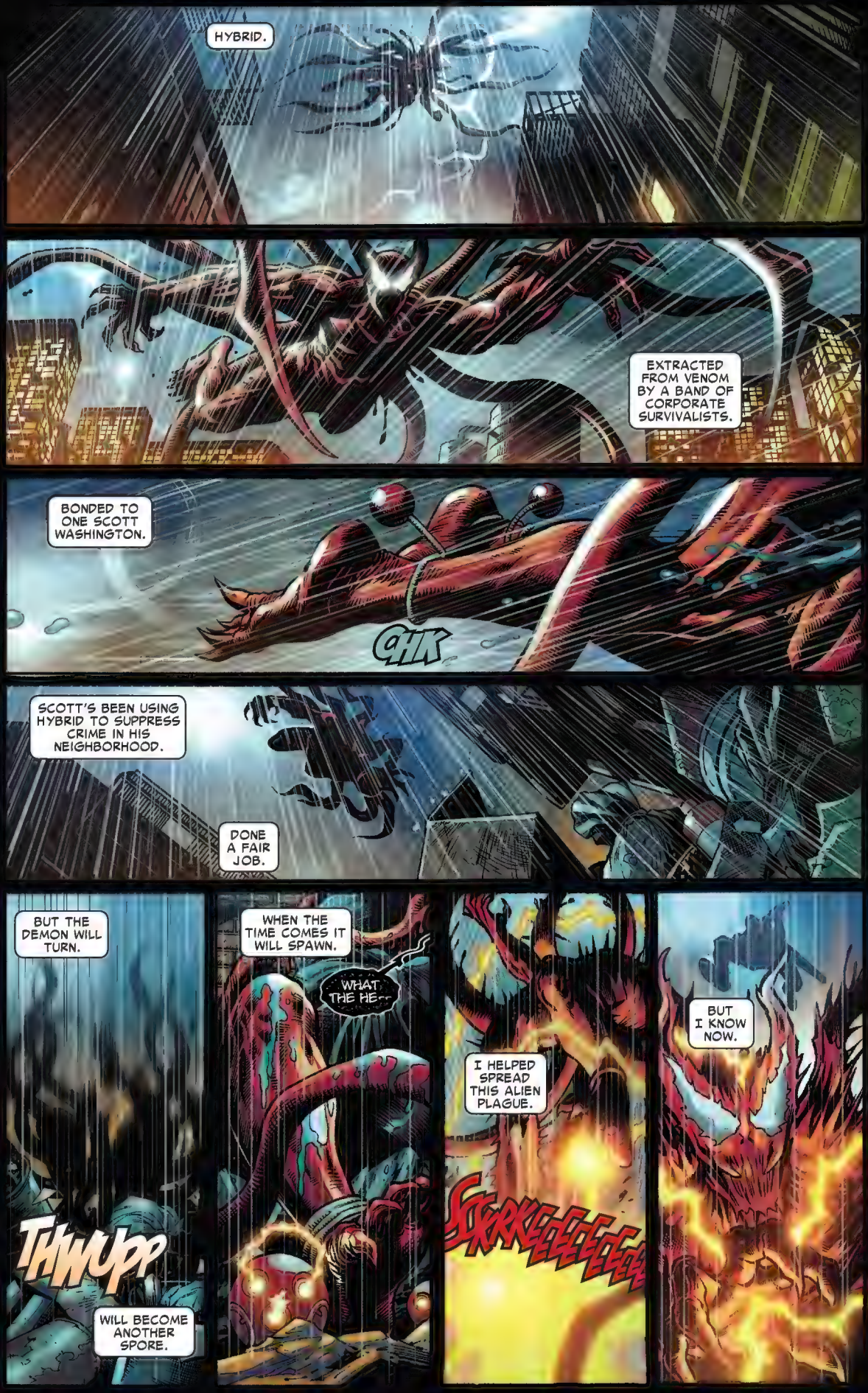
HAD YOUR FUN.
RELINQUISH THE SPIRIT TO ITS RIGHTFUL VESSEL.

SHE IS MY HOST.
DAMMIT! WAS THAT ALEJANDRA?!
DID SHE TAKE IT?
YEESS.
HERE...
THANKS FOR THE LOAN, CORPORAL.
GOOD WORK HERE, GENERAL.
THERE YOU ARE...

QUINCY
AGENT VENOM, YOU'RE COMING WITH US.
AVENGERS, TAKE HIM--
WHOA-WHOA-WHOA-- NO. YOU GOT THE KID ALL WRONG, CAP.
HE SAVED THE DAY, SHOWED REAL GRAVEL. HE'S A HERO.
HE IS *VENOM*, GENERAL.
DON'T TRUST THE SYMBIOTE.
I SAVED NEW YORK, LAS VEGAS AND YOU.
WHAT'LL IT TAKE TO GET A BREAK?
WE COULD, UH...MAYBE WE COULD HELP MAKE SURE THE SYMBIOTE STAYS DORMANT.
WE COULD POTENTIALLY SHUT OFF THE SYNAPTIC COUPLING CENTER...
THERE YA GO, CAP. THE NERDS HAVE SPOKEN.

I JUST WANT TO SERVE MY COUNTRY.
ALL RIGHT THEN...
THOMPSON. CORPORAL EUGENE THOMPSON.
FRIENDS CALL ME FLASH.
OKAY, FLASH. MAYBE WE CAN FIND A WAY TO HELP YOU.
PROVIDED YOU DO ONE THING.
SIR?
RETURN MY BIKE.
WHAT HAPPENED BACK THERE...ARE YOU FREE OF THE BLACK INFLUENCE, DAIMON?
DAIMON?
WHAT IS IT?
HMH? OH, NOTHING. I'M FINE.
IT'LL BE FINE, STEPHEN...
"...A PROBLEM FOR ANOTHER DAY."

Hell.
YOU WANT TO GIVE IT ANOTHER TRY?
YES, FATHER. PLEASE, FATHER.
HMMH. WELL, I WAS THINKING OF OPENING MY OWN CASINO. ONE MUCH LESS CONSPICUOUS, OBVIOUSLY.
WANT TO RUN IT?
...YES. PLEASE.
SUCH TORTURE, CONSTANTLY COMING SO CLOSE ONLY TO FAIL. ALWAYS BACK HERE, BEGGING FOR ANOTHER TRY.
"YOUR ENTIRE LIFE, A LOOP. YOUR OWN PERSONAL HELL DEVISED BY SOMEONE WHO HATES YOU VERY MUCH. SUCH CRUEL, UNENDING MONOTONY.
"WHAT TYPE OF FATHER WOULD DO SUCH A THING TO HIS OWN SON?"
HMMH?
FALCON'S FORTUNE
KWORF KWORF
YOU THE NEW GUYS?
Y-YEAH... GUESS SO.
WELL, C'MON, YA KOOKS.
WE GOT A DOZEN OVERFLOWING TOILETS OVER AT JOSE RIA'S DISCOUNT ENCHILADA BUFFET.
HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE THE PRINCE OF HELL AND HIS DOLT BRIDE TO CLIMB THE LADDER THIS TIME...?
ETERNITY.


HYBRID.
EXTRACTED FROM VENOM BY A BAND OF CORPORATE SURVIVALISTS.
BONDED TO ONE SCOTT WASHINGTON.
CHK
SCOTT'S BEEN USING HYBRID TO SUPPRESS CRIME IN HIS NEIGHBORHOOD.
DONE A FAIR JOB.
BUT THE DEMON WILL TURN.
THWUPP
WILL BECOME ANOTHER SPORE.
WHEN THE TIME COMES IT WILL SPAWN.
WHAT THE HE--
I HELPED SPREAD THIS ALIEN PLAGUE.
SKRRKEEEEEEEEE
BUT I KNOW NOW.

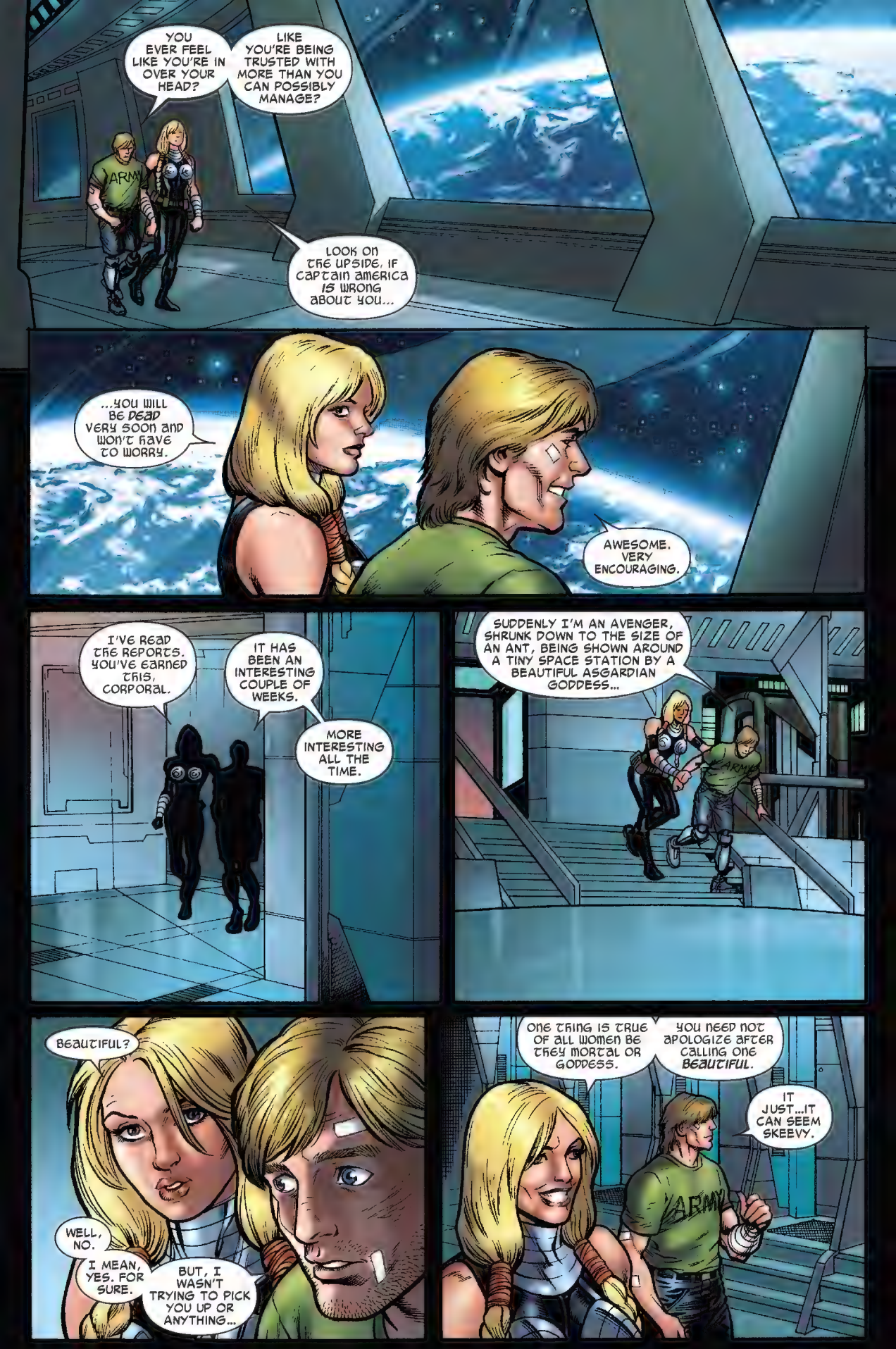
AND I KNOW THE CURE.
KRUCHH
YERGH--!
YOU PUT UP A GOOD FIGHT.
SHOWED REAL HEART.
THAT THING IS BONDED TO YOU AND I DON'T KNOW ANY GOOD WAY TO UNDO THAT.
BROCK? WHAT THE--?
WELL, THAT'S NOT ENTIRELY TRUE...
NO! PLEASE, EDDIE! I'LL GIVE IT TO YOU, DO WHATEVER YOU WANT--

I DON'T WANT ANY OF THIS, SCOTT.
BRAK-BRAK-BRAK-BRAK-
GHAKK...
FFFSHHHHH
YERAGHH!
KAKK
D-DON'T...
D-DESERVE... THIS...
NONE OF US DO.
IT'S EITHER YOU NOW...
"...OR THE ENTIRE PLANET LATER."
SO, YES, I THINK WITH THIS THE VENOM SYMBIOTE WILL BE AS SAFE AS ANY OTHER ARMOR OR MAGIC RELIC OR RADIOACTIVE NIPPLE LASERS OR WHATEVER THE REST OF US USE.
The Lighthouse Space Station.
HEADQUARTERS OF THE SECRET AVENGERS.

RADIOACTIVE NIPPLE LASER MAN ISN'T AN AVENGER ANYMORE, BEAST. DON'T YOU READ THE NEWSLETTER?
ENOUGH. REASSURE US THAT THIS MONSTER CAN BE TRUSTED WITH OUR LIVES ON THE FIELD.
THE GOVERNMENT SCIENTISTS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE NEURO-INHIBITOR THAT SUBDUES THE SYMBIOTE'S MIND WERE ONLY HALF WAY THERE, VALKYRIE.
THE SERUM WAS MISSING A FEW COMPONENTS THAT DR. PYM AND I BELIEVE WILL OFFER A MORE... COMPLETE SUBDUING EFFECT.
CORPORAL THOMPSON WILL BE ABLE TO CONTROL THE SYMBIOTE WITHOUT IT PERMANENTLY BONDING TO HIM?
IT ALREADY HAS.
YES. WHEN IT'S NOT BEING USED FOR OFFICIAL AVENGERS BUSINESS IT STAYS HERE, UNDER MY CONTROL.
HANK, THE SYMBIOTE PYMP.
I'VE GOT ENEMIES.
I MIGHT NEED THIS THING IN A REAL HURRY ONE DAY.
HURTS TO BE AWAY.
YOU'RE AN AVENGER NOW, FLASH. YOU DON'T HAVE TO DEAL WITH THAT SORT OF THING ALONE ANYMORE.
SURE. I KNOW.
BUT I'M WORRIED I'LL END UP IN AN AWKWARD SITUATION AND NOT HAVE THE SYMBIOTE WHEN I NEED IT.
NEED IT NOW.
BURNING IN MY CHEST.

I'M GIVING YOU A NUMBER, IN AN EMERGENCY YOU DIAL IT.
THE SYMBIOTE'S CONTAINMENT VESSEL WILL BE FLOODED WITH PYM PARTICLES, SHRUNK DOWN TO SUBATOMIC SIZE AND BROADCAST TO THE PHONE YOU'RE CALLING FROM.
SO I JUST CALL THIS NUMBER AND...
THE SYMBIOTE WILL EMERGE FROM THE EARPIECE.
THE TEMPORARY EFFECTS OF THE UNSTABLE PYM PARTICLES WILL BE NEGATED, AND YOU'LL HAVE YOUR SEDATED SYMBIOTE.
TIEP TIEP
ACT INDIFFERENT.
WE'LL MONITOR YOUR USAGE.
TO MAKE SURE YOU DON'T ABUSE YOUR ACCESS TO THE SUIT.
WE NEED TO ENSURE YOU'RE NEVER BONDED TO IT.
YOU WERE WEARING THE SUIT WITH NO SEDATIVES FOR DAYS ON END.
BONDING TIME HAS VARIED BASED ON THE USER.
DO YOU FEEL ANY PHYSICAL OR MENTAL WITHDRAWALS?
SELL IT, CALM.
LIKE I PRACTICED.
NO.
NOW THAT I'VE GOT THE HANG OF THESE PROSTHETIC LEGS, I'M DAMN GLAD TO BE RID OF THE THING FOR A WHILE.
YOU GOT LUCKY.

I'M GLAD THAT WE COULD MAKE THIS WORK.
TO BE ABLE TO TAKE SOMETHING THAT CAUSED SO MUCH PAIN AND USE IT FOR THE GOOD OF HUMANITY...
I KNOW YOU WON'T LET ME DOWN, CORPORAL.
NO, CAPTAIN, I WON'T.
COME. I WILL SEND YOU HOME.
'LOT RIDING ON THAT MAN.
YES. IF HE'S LYING...WE COULD HAVE A PROBLEM.
AND THEN THERE'S THE OTHER VERY REAL DILEMMA...
...ARE YOU GOING TO TELL SPIDER-MAN?


YOU EVER FEEL LIKE YOU'RE IN OVER YOUR HEAD?
LIKE YOU'RE BEING TRUSTED WITH MORE THAN YOU CAN POSSIBLY MANAGE?
LOOK ON THE UPSIDE, IF CAPTAIN AMERICA IS WRONG ABOUT YOU...
...YOU WILL BE DEAD VERY SOON AND WON'T HAVE TO WORRY.
AWESOME. VERY ENCOURAGING.
I'VE READ THE REPORTS. YOU'VE EARNED THIS, CORPORAL.
IT HAS BEEN AN INTERESTING COUPLE OF WEEKS.
MORE INTERESTING ALL THE TIME.
SUDDENLY I'M AN AVENGER, SHRUNK DOWN TO THE SIZE OF AN ANT, BEING SHOWN AROUND A TINY SPACE STATION BY A BEAUTIFUL ASGARDIAN GODDESS...
BEAUTIFUL?
WELL, NO.
I MEAN, YES. FOR SURE.
BUT, I WASN'T TRYING TO PICK YOU UP OR ANYTHING...
ONE THING IS TRUE OF ALL WOMEN BE THEY MORTAL OR GODDESS.
YOU NEED NOT APOLOGIZE AFTER CALLING ONE BEAUTIFUL.
IT JUST...IT CAN SEEM SKEEVY.

ONLY IF YOU'RE TRYING TO GET ME INTO BED.
I'M SORRY, REALLY, I'D NEVER TRY...
I MEAN...
ARMY
MOMENTS AGO I WAS BEAUTIFUL.
OH, YOU ARE, I JUST...
ARMY
I'VE GOT A GIRLFRIEND.
OR I DID...WE MIGHT BE GETTING BACK TOGETHER.
I APPRECIATE YOU LETTING ME DOWN EASY.
NO, I WASN'T SAYING YOU WERE INTERESTED-- I WAS, IT'S JUST--
BANG BANG
FLASH?!
OPEN THE DOOR, BUDDY.
IT'S PETE.
BANG BANG
LOOK, I KNOW YOU'RE IN THERE.
YOUR LANDLADY SAID YOU HAVEN'T LEFT THE APARTMENT IN DAYS.

H-HEY, PETER.
SORRY, I WAS... IN THE SHOWER.
I THINK IT'S STRANGE THAT YOU SHOWER IN ALL OF YOUR CLOTHES AND THAT YOU DON'T GET YOUR HAIR WET.
WELL... YEAH... THAT IS STRANGE...
NO BOOZE.
WHEN'D YOU BECOME MY MOTHER, PARKER?
WHEN BETTY SHOWED UP AT MY HOUSE A FEW DAYS AGO, HYSTERICAL, IN TEARS.
SAID SHE'D BEEN STAYING WITH YOUR MOM, TO HELP CONSOLE HER. SAID YOU LEFT TOWN FOR "WORK."
SAID YOU CALLED HER IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT AND BROKE UP WITH HER OVER THE PHONE.
SO SHE CALLED THE V.A.
YOUR SUPERVISOR?
NOBODY DOWN THERE'D EVER HEARD OF HIM.

AFTER DAD DIED... I STARTED DRINKING.
I GOT STONE DRUNK AND I STAYED THAT WAY.
ALL I REMEMBER OF THE PAST FEW WEEKS IS OCCASIONALLY WAKING UP, SCRAPING MYSELF UP OFF OF THE FLOOR AND SHUFFLING MYSELF OUT THE DOOR TO GET MORE WHISKEY.
YEAH. OKAY. C'MON...
"...LET'S GET SOME FRESH AIR."
SCREAM.
ANOTHER VENOM SPAWN.

THE HOST, DONNA DIEGO, IS A DELUSIONAL SCHIZOPHRENIC.
BAK
TRIED TO KILL ME ONCE UPON A TIME.
SMART AS A WHIP--HARD TO TRACK.
SO I BRING HER TO ME.
SHE'LL HAVE HEARD ABOUT HYBRID.
HEARD ABOUT THE OTHERS.
SHE'LL FOLLOW THE TRAIL I LEFT...
FOLLOW IT TO PURIFICATION.
THANKS FOR COMING, DONNA.

EASIER TO DO THIS HERE.
AHHHH--!
SCKRKCCC

SSKRKEEE

BUT WHAT I DON'T UNDERSTAND...
...WHY TAKE BETTY DOWN WITH YOU?
I BROKE UP WITH HER TO KEEP HER AWAY FROM ME, PETE.
TO KEEP HER FROM GOING DOWN WITH ME.
BETTY'S BEEN THROUGH A LOT, TOO.
THE WAY YOU HANDLED THIS... IT'S LIKE YOU'RE GOING OUT OF YOUR WAY TO MAKE IT WORSE.
YOU KNOW THAT'S NOT WHAT I'M TRYING TO DO.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TRYING TO DO.
HOW WOULD I?
LAST COUPLE MONTHS IT'S LIKE YOU'RE NOT EVEN HERE ANYMORE.
AND THIS IS COMING FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE "STRETCHED-TOO-THIN" FAN CLUB.
IT'S COMPLICATED.
THEN TELL ME ABOUT IT.

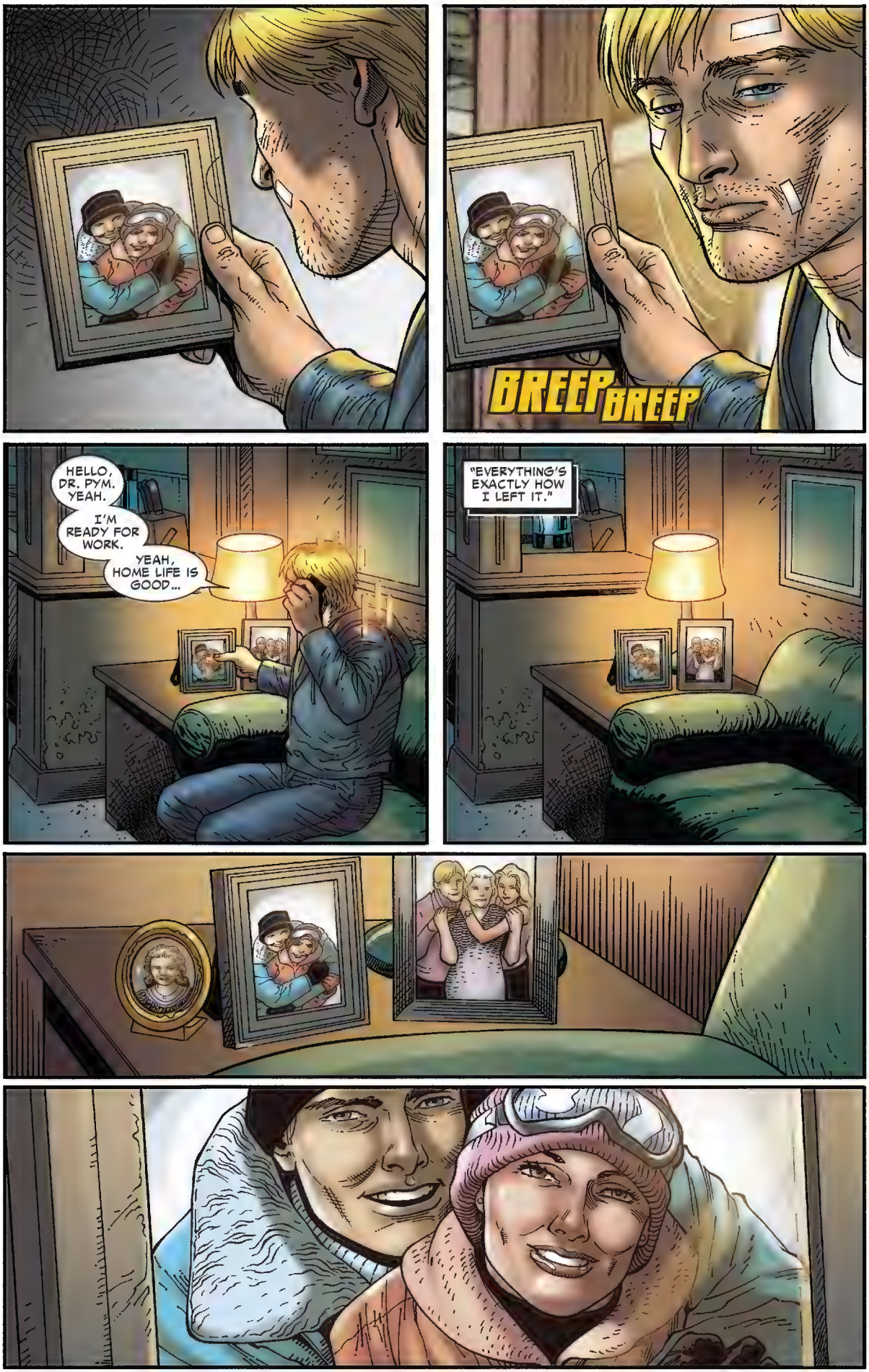
WHAT I'M GOING TO TELL YOU...YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE STRONG OPINIONS, PETE.
YOU...YOU PROMISE TO KEEP IT BETWEEN US? NO MATTER WHAT.
I PROMISE.
I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHERE TO BEGIN...
BREEP BREEP BREEP BREEP
IT'S MY SISTER.
I HAVE TO TAKE THIS.
Jessie
HEY, JESS.
YEAH, BEEN BACK FOR A FEW DAYS NOW.
I GOT... TIED UP.
I KNOW. YEAH.
I HAVE TO MAKE A LIVING, I COULDN'T JUST QUIT MY JOB.
I GET IT. I DO.
OKAY. ALL RIGHT. I'LL BE OVER THERE IN A BIT.

I HAVE TO GO SEE MY MOM. I HAVEN'T SEEN HER SINCE THE FUNERAL.
ANOTHER MESS I'VE MADE.
DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT.
WE'LL CATCH UP LATER.
HEY, JESSE... MOM.
YOU'RE USING THE LEGS.
TAKING SOME TIME TO GET USED TO.
ON THE ROAD THE WHEELCHAIR WAS TOO MUCH OF A HASSLE.
SPEAKING OF WHICH, I'M SORRY I HAD TO GO AWAY SO SOON AFTER THE FUNERAL.
I DIDN'T HAVE ANY CHOICE IN--
EUGENE, I LIVED WITH A LYING DRUNK FOR 46 YEARS, GOD REST HIS SOUL.

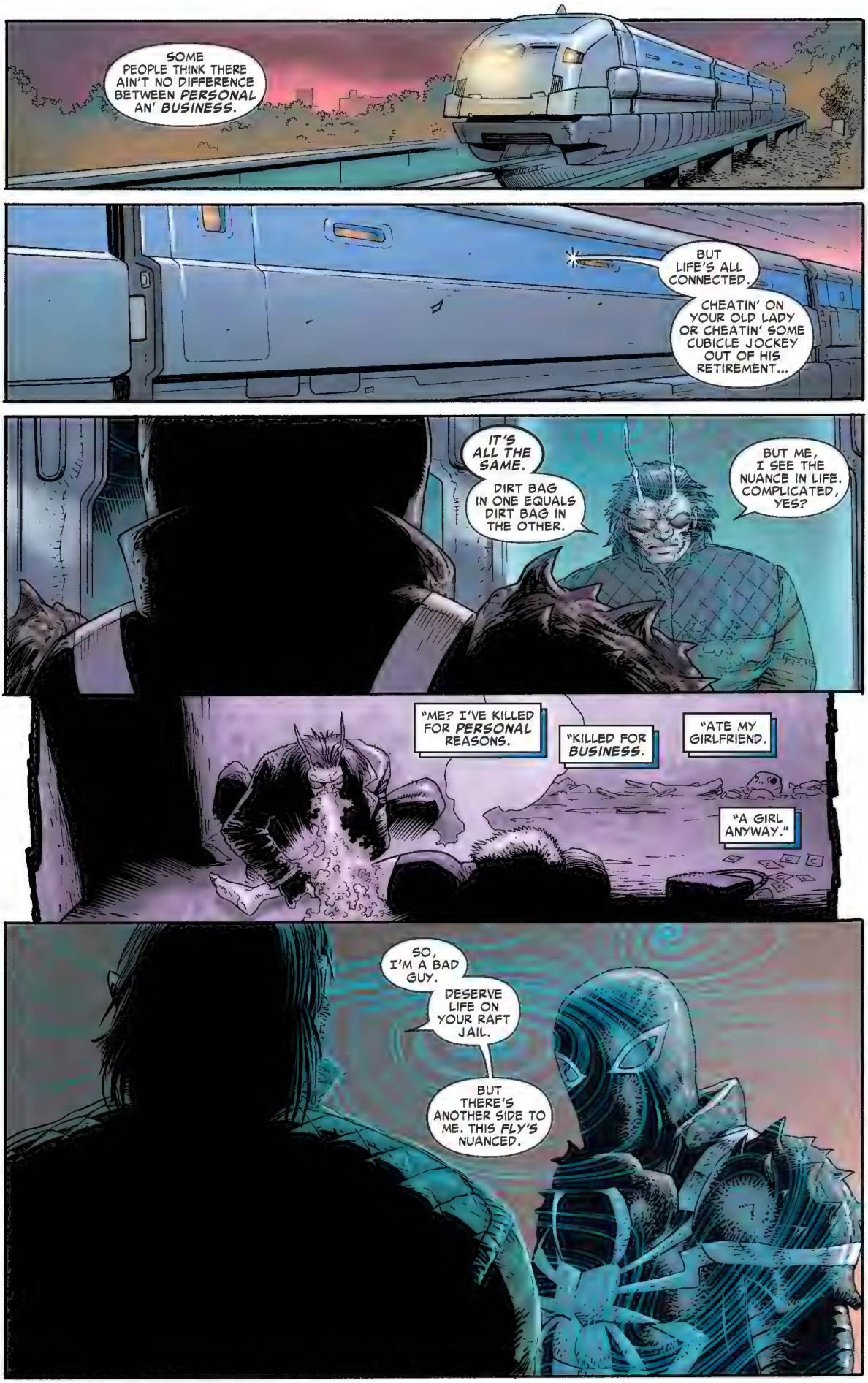
IF YOU CAN'T TELL ME THE TRUTH ABOUT WHAT'S GOING ON WITH YOU, DON'T TELL ME ANYTHING.
I NEVER ASKED VERY MUCH OF YOU. BUT I'M TELLING YOU RIGHT NOW, IF YOU WANT A RELATIONSHIP WITH ME THERE'S ONE RULE.
NO MORE LYING.
TOLD HER I'D BEEN DRINKING.
TOLD HER I WAS BACK IN THE PROGRAM.
LOOKED HER IN THE FACE AND LIED.
NO OTHER WAY.
CAN'T TELL HER THE TRUTH.
TRUTH IS-- I PUT HER IN DANGER.
STILL IN DANGER.
CRIME MASTER...STILL OUT THERE.
HE AND JACK O' LANTERN--THE LAST PIECES OF MY MISTAKES.
LAST THING I HAVE TO SET RIGHT.
THEN I CAN START OVER.
WORK THE STEPS.
BE A HERO.

WORK THINGS OUT...
BETTY?
REMEMBER THIS TRIP TO ASPEN?
OF COURSE.
YOU TOLD ME SOME FRIEND HAD CANCELED ON YOU, STUCK YOU WITH A CHALET.
I KNEW YOU'D PLANNED IT TO GET US BACK TOGETHER.
YOU *USED TO BE* SO BAD AT LYING.
I REMEMBER THINKING THAT I SHOULDN'T GO.
SHOULDN'T GET BACK TOGETHER WITH YOU.
JUST SAVE MYSELF THE FUTURE HEARTBREAK.
BETTY--
I DIDN'T COME HERE TO GIVE YOU THE OPPORTUNITY TO TALK TO ME.
YOU DON'T HAVE THE COURAGE TO TALK TO ME FACE-TO-FACE SO YOU DON'T GET TO TALK TO ME FACE-TO-FACE.
YOU GET TO LISTEN.
I'M SORRY ABOUT YOUR FATHER.
I KNOW WHAT YOUR CHILDHOOD DID TO YOU, AND I KNOW THAT YOU CAN'T SHAKE IT.
GIVEN WHAT YOU GREW UP WITH IT'S AMAZING YOU CAME OUT AS WELL AS YOU DID.
BUT THE MAN YOU ARE ISN'T ENOUGH FOR ME.

SPENDING THE LAST WEEK WITH YOUR MOTHER--WHILE YOU WERE DRUNK IN A DITCH--OPENED MY EYES.
WHAT YOUR FATHER PUT HER THROUGH IS NOT GOING TO BE MY FUTURE.
SO YOU DON'T GET TO CALL AND BREAK UP WITH ME, FLASH.
BECAUSE IF YOU BREAK UP WITH ME IT MEANS AT SOME POINT YOU'RE GOING TO THINK YOU CAN COME AND WIN ME BACK.
I WON'T LIVE MY LIFE TRYING TO CHANGE AND FIX YOU.
I WANT TO MAKE THIS AS CLEAR AS I POSSIBLY CAN--
WE WON'T *EVER* BE GETTING BACK TOGETHER.
SLAM

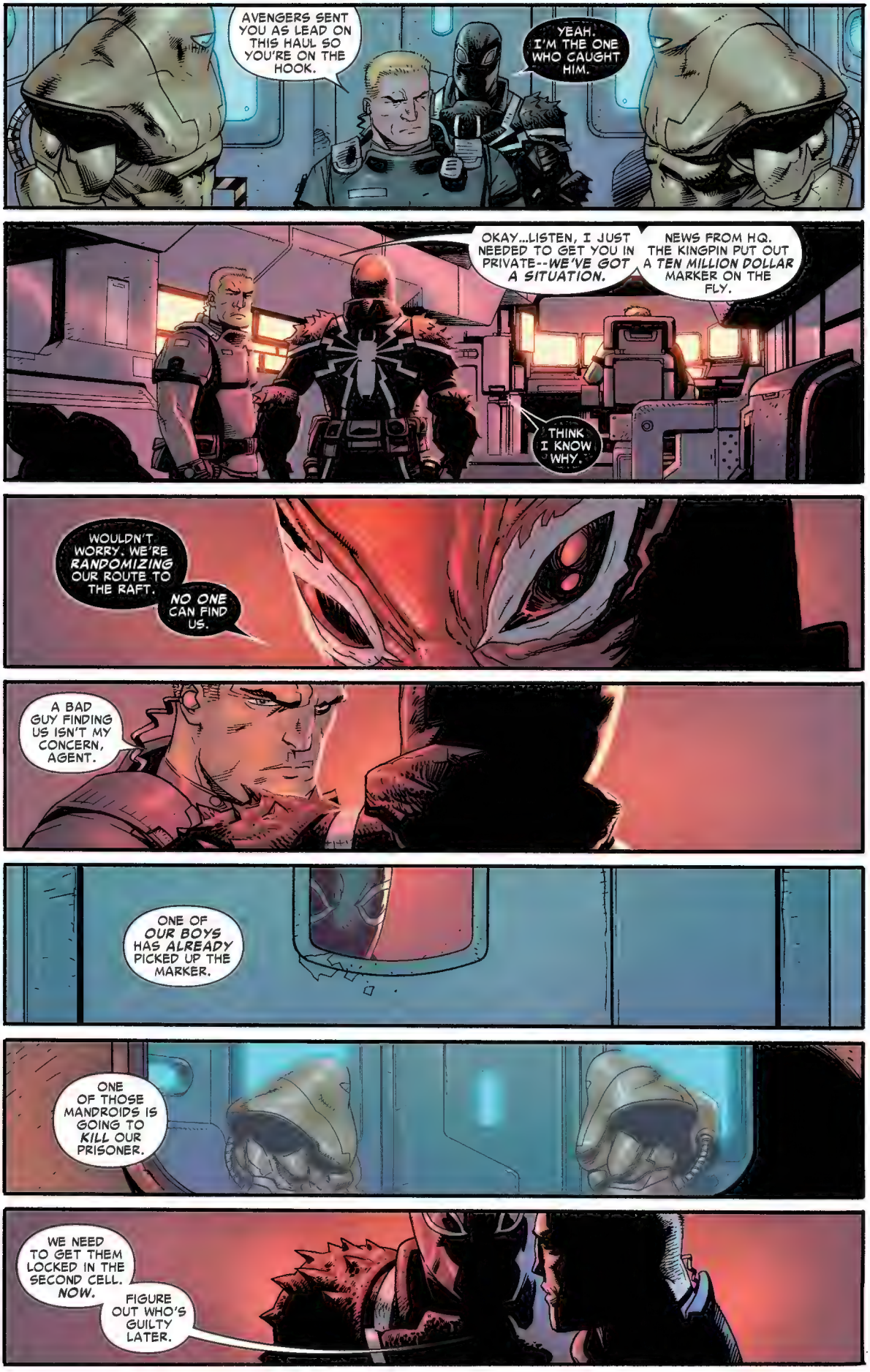

BREEP BREEP
HELLO, DR. PYM. YEAH.
I'M READY FOR WORK.
YEAH, HOME LIFE IS GOOD...
"EVERYTHING'S EXACTLY HOW I LEFT IT."

16 "CLEMENCY"


SOME PEOPLE THINK THERE AIN'T NO DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PERSONAL AN' BUSINESS.
BUT LIFE'S ALL CONNECTED.
CHEATIN' ON YOUR OLD LADY OR CHEATIN' SOME CUBICLE JOCKEY OUT OF HIS RETIREMENT...
IT'S ALL THE SAME.
DIRT BAG IN ONE EQUALS DIRT BAG IN THE OTHER.
BUT ME, I SEE THE NUANCE IN LIFE. COMPLICATED, YES?
"ME? I'VE KILLED FOR PERSONAL REASONS.
"KILLED FOR BUSINESS.
"ATE MY GIRLFRIEND.
"A GIRL ANYWAY."
SO, I'M A BAD GUY.
DESERVE LIFE ON YOUR RAFT JAIL.
BUT THERE'S ANOTHER SIDE TO ME. THIS FLY'S NUANCED.

"A WEEK BEFORE YOU CAUGHT ME, I SWIPED COUPLE-FEW MILLION DOLLARS FROM A HUMAN TRAFFICKING, DRUG-DONKEY, UGLINESS-PARADE OPERATED BY...
"...NONE OTHER THAN...
"...WAIT FOR IT...
"...THE KINGPIN!"
AND YOU WANT TO BRIBE ME?
BIG HERO LIKE YOU--? NAH. MY PLAN'S BUILT ON YOU BEING A GOOD GUY.
SEE, THE OTHER SIDE TO ME, SIDE I BET NO ONE TOLD YOU ABOUT--
I HAVE A SON.
SAMMY, NINE YEARS OLD.
"I STOLE THAT MONEY TO BUY SAMMY A FUTURE. I OWE HIM.
"BOY'S MOTHER ABANDONED HIM.
"I AIN'T AROUND FOR 'IM.
"CRIME WAS MY OPTION."
AIN'T CUT AND DRY LIKE YOU WANT IT TO BE.
I'M A BAD GUY, TRUE, BUT I LOVE MY BOY.
AND KINGPIN GONNA KILL MY SAMMY IF I DON'T RETURN HIS MONEY.

GIVE ME HIS INFORMATION.
WE'LL GET YOUR SON INTO PROTECTIVE RELOCATION SERVICES.
PROTECTIVE SERVICES?!
"THIS IS THE KINGPIN.
"HE'LL FIND SAMMY NO MATTER WHAT.
"ANYTHING I TELL YOU, KINGPIN *WILL* FIND OUT.
"LET ME GIVE KINGPIN HIS MONEY AND I'LL TURN MYSELF IN--*ON MY BOY'S LIFE.*"
AIN'T YOU EVER SUNK DOWN *LOW?*
NEEDED A SECOND *CHANCE?*
FINE. FORGET IT. DO ME AT LEAST *ONE* SMALL FAVOR?
IN MY BELONGINGS THERE'S A LETTER THAT I WROTE TO SAMMY.
YOU FIND HIM, MAKE SURE HE GETS THE LETTER?
JUST WANT HIM TO KNOW HIS OLD MAN LOVES HIM BEFORE THE GANGSTERS KILL 'IM.
AGENT, WE'VE GOT A TRANSFER COMING UP, NEED YOUR SIGNATURE.


AVENGERS SENT YOU AS LEAD ON THIS HAUL SO YOU'RE ON THE HOOK.
YEAH. I'M THE ONE WHO CAUGHT HIM.
OKAY...LISTEN, I JUST NEEDED TO GET YOU IN PRIVATE--*WE'VE GOT A SITUATION.*
NEWS FROM HQ. THE KINGPIN PUT OUT A *TEN MILLION DOLLAR* MARKER ON THE FLY.
THINK I KNOW WHY.
WOULDN'T WORRY. WE'RE *RANDOMIZING* OUR ROUTE TO THE RAFT.
NO ONE CAN FIND US.
A BAD GUY FINDING US ISN'T MY CONCERN, AGENT.
ONE OF *OUR BOYS* HAS *ALREADY* PICKED UP THE MARKER.
ONE OF THOSE MANDROIDS IS GOING TO *KILL* OUR PRISONER.
WE NEED TO GET THEM LOCKED IN THE SECOND CELL. *NOW.*
FIGURE OUT WHO'S GUILTY LATER.

WE'VE GOT A PROBLEM.
I JUST GOT WORD FROM HQ--AGENT DALRYMPLE HERE ACCEPTED A BRIBE TO ASSASSINATE OUR PRISONER.
SERIOUSLY?
THE SOURCE SAYS HE'S RIGGED THE FLY'S HOLDING CELL TO BLOW.
WE GOTTA MOVE HIM.
YOU TWO WAIT IN THE SECOND CELL.
I'LL BRING FLY TO YOU TO SECURE.
YES, SIR.
YOU SURE YOU KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOIN'?
KEEPING YOU SAFE.
YOU BRINGING HIM HERE--
DON'T EXACTLY FILL ME WITH CONFIDENCE.
SIR-- GAAKK--

HI.
I'M NOT AGENT DALRYMPLE.
I'M THE HOBGOBLIN.
SHRUKK
GRAGHH--

NO NEED TO TRY AND CALL FOR HELP, I'VE SCRAMBLED ALL OUTGOING SIGNALS.
LET ME OUTTA HERE! LET ME OUT!
MY EMPLOYER WOULD LIKE TO OFFER YOU A CONTRACT, MR. VENOM.
FIRST HELP ME KILL THE HUMAN FLY...
...AND THEN HELP KILL CRIME-MASTER AND JACK O' LANTERN.
WE KNOW YOU'VE BEEN HUNTING LEADS ON THEM.
WIPING OUT THREE PSYCHOS MUST SOUND APPEALING TO SOME PART OF YOU.

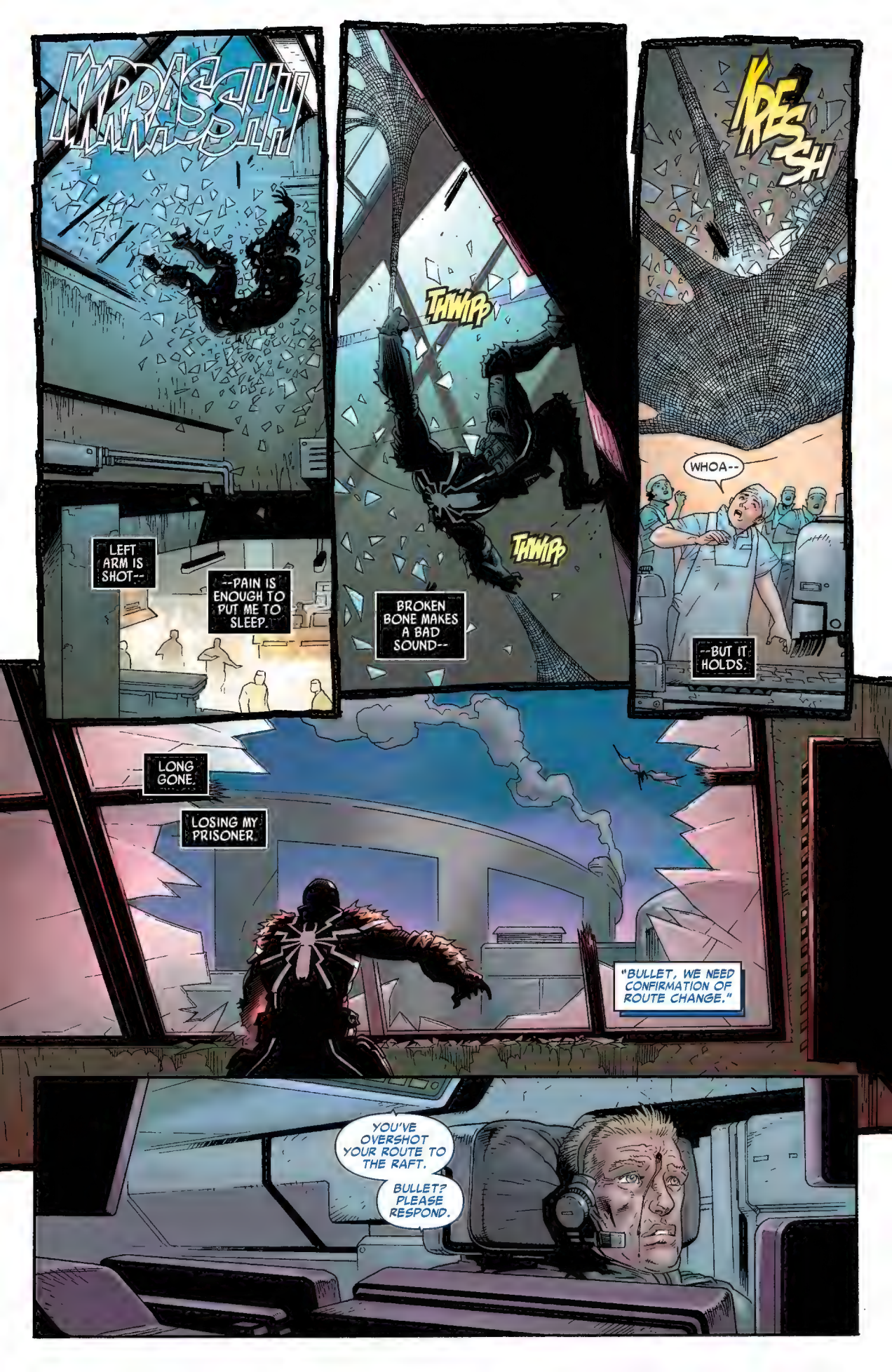
MY EMPLOYER WILL PAY YOU TEN MILLION IN CASH FOR THIS HELP.
YOUR EMPLOYER IS A FAT PIECE OF--
EAS-SY. HE'S LISTENING IN. ALWAYS LISTENING.
THINK FOR A SECOND.
TEN MILLION BUYS YOU ANYTHING YOU WANT--SERVANTS, A BEACH HOUSE, A CHALET IN THE MOUNTAINS, A NAKED LADY PARTY YACHT-- HAPPINESS.
YOU'RE ALREADY PLANNING ON KILLING CRIME-MASTER.
SEEN YOU SKULKING ABOUT HIS BASE LOOKING FOR A CLEAR SHOT.
SO, WHY NOT GET RICH TO BOOT?
TEN MILLION. YEAH. OKAY.
IT'S A DEAL.
YOU CAN'T TRUST THESE PEOPLE!
MY EMPLOYER PAYS HIS DEBTS, YOU'LL SOON SEE, MR. DEACON.
FINE--SURE! GO RIGHT AHEAD! MAYBE YOU CAN HELP THEM KILL MY SON, TOO.
DOES IT MAKE YOU MAD, DEACON?

DOES IT MAKE YOU MAD ENOUGH TO SPIT?
WHAT? WHAT KIND OF A...OH, I GET IT.
MAD ENOUGH TO--
GLOORFF
YERAGHH!
HURTS. GOOD TRICK.
FFSSHHH
GOT A FEW UP MY OWN SLEEVE.
Ooooooh

OKAY. YOU'VE FLUSHED AWAY ALL THE GOOD OPTIONS, VENOM.
AND EVERYBODY THINKS IT'S THE *VILLAINS* WHO ARE...
...CRAZY.

SCREEEHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA
HRAGHHH!
HIGH-PITCHED, HUH?
SYMBIOTE IS NOT A FAN. FIRE EITHER, RIGHT?
SMACK
GHRAGH--
CONDUCTOR'S NOT ANSWERING AND SOMEONE'S JAMMED THE DOORS!
GET ME A CHARGE, WE'LL HAVE TO BLOW IT OPEN.
O-OPEN?! YOU CAN'T EXPECT US TO GO RUNNING INTO THERE?!
NO WAY. THE MAN DON'T PAY ME ENOUGH.
SCREEEHAHAHAHAH!
HOW DOES IT FEEL?!
THWIP
ABOUT TO FEEL A BIT BETTER--

KWAHHWOOOOM
HERACLITUS OF EPHESUS TAUGHT THAT THE UNIVERSE WAS MADE OF FIRE.
LOOK AT YOU, GOING FERAL SO SOON AND FOR NO REASON.
LET ME GIVE YOU A REASON.
GHRAGH!
SHWUNK
"IT'S JUST A QUICK RUN, ROOKIE.
"YOU'LL BE BACK IN TIME FOR THE KNICKS/NETS GAME."
GONNA PUNCH HAWKEYE IN HIS UGLY, ARROW-LAUNCHING NOSE WHEN I GET BACK.


KRRSSHH
LEFT ARM IS SHOT--
--PAIN IS ENOUGH TO PUT ME TO SLEEP.
THWIPP
THWIPP
BROKEN BONE MAKES A BAD SOUND--
KRESH
WHOA--
--BUT IT HOLDS.
LONG GONE.
LOSING MY PRISONER.
"BULLET, WE NEED CONFIRMATION OF ROUTE CHANGE."
YOU'VE OVERSHOT YOUR ROUTE TO THE RAFT.
BULLET? PLEASE RESPOND.

THAT'S A GOOD SIGN. BOTH OUTTA MY WAY.
BOOGIE TIME.
FFSSHHHH
OKAY. THIS IS WHAT GOOD LUCK FEELS LIKE?
THIS PARTY'S IN YOUR HONOR--
LEAVING IN THE MIDDLE?
HOOF--
TWOKK
BAD FORM.
SHRKOOOOM
HOLY--!

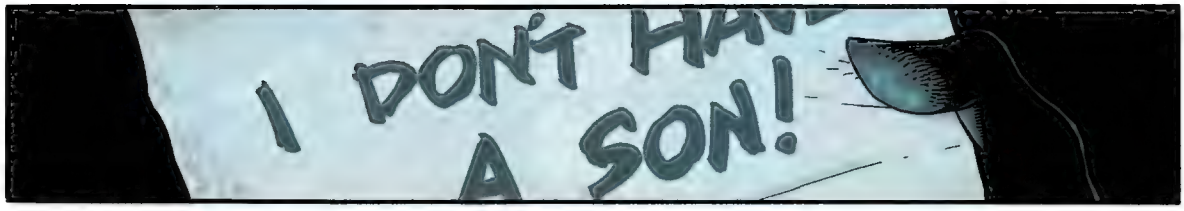
MY WINGS ARE FULL OF DEATH POISON!
GHAA--
SSHRULIDD
MY BELLY FULL OF-- GLORFF
YERAGHAGH!
FFFSSHHHH
YOU LISTENIN', KINGPIN?
CHOMPP
ARAGHAHH!
I'M EATIN' YOUR ASSASSIN.
YOU HEAR ME CHEWIN'?!

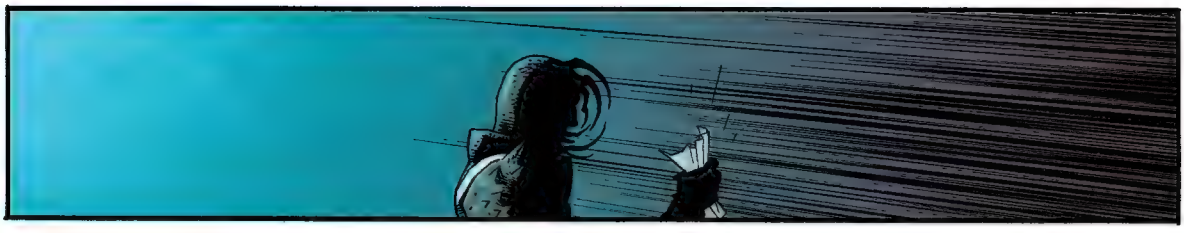
NEXT I'M COMIN' FOR YO--
GHRAGH!
SHNK
TELL ME WHERE OUR MONEY IS--I'LL KILL YOU QUICK.
QUICKISH, ANYWAY.
YOU DON'T SCARE ME.
I TAKE YOU--NO QUESTIONS--I TAKE YOU DOWN.
BOTH OF YOU! HANDS ON YOUR HEAD!
RIGHT NOW!
TIME-OUT THE FIGHT FOR JUST ONE SECOND HERE, DEACON?
COPS. ALWAYS WITH THE WARNINGS.
BRRR

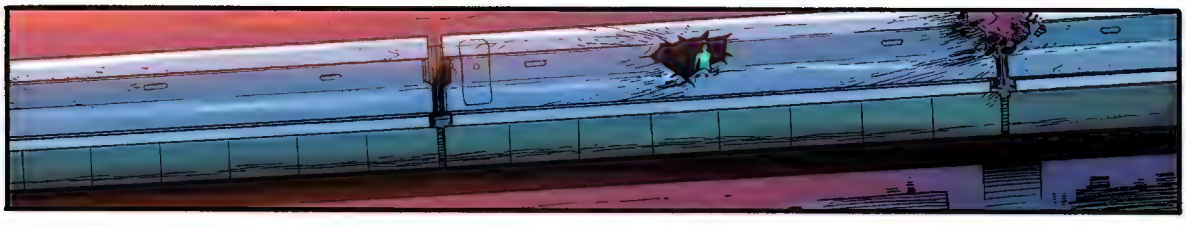
HUH--?
GRROOOM
THWOOP
YOU'LL HAVE TO KILL ME TO STOP ME.
I'LL DIE BEFORE I SEE THAT PIG HURT MY BOY.
HELP! PLEASE--

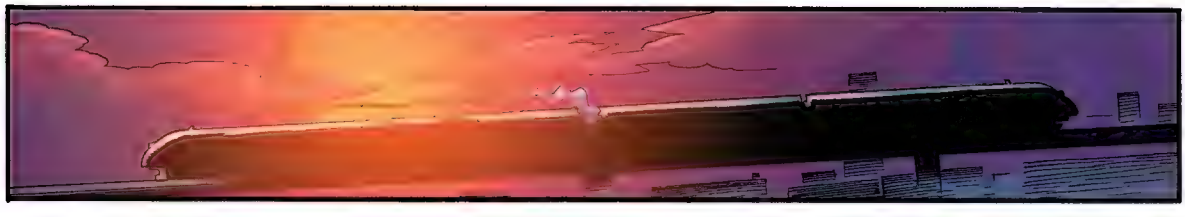
PLEASE HELP ME!
THERE YA GO.
KILL ME OR GRAB THE GUARD.
LET ME SAVE MY BOY.
I'LL TURN MYSELF IN ONCE I DO.
I WILL.
T-THANK YOU--
YES, THANK YOU.
PLEASE STILL DELIVER THE LETTER TO MY SON, IN CASE I DON'T MAKE IT.
TRUST ME...

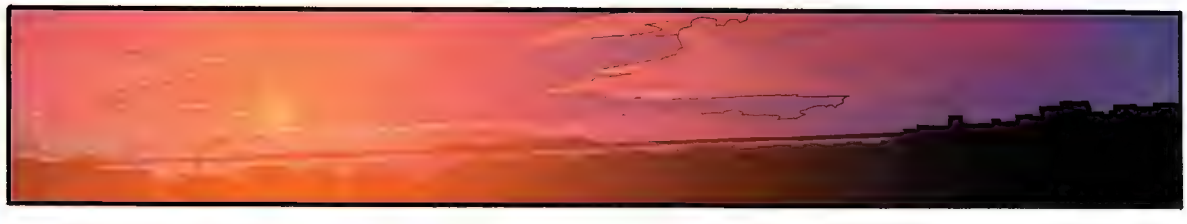
"...YOU'LL FIND IT ILLUMINATING."


I DON'T HAV
A SON!



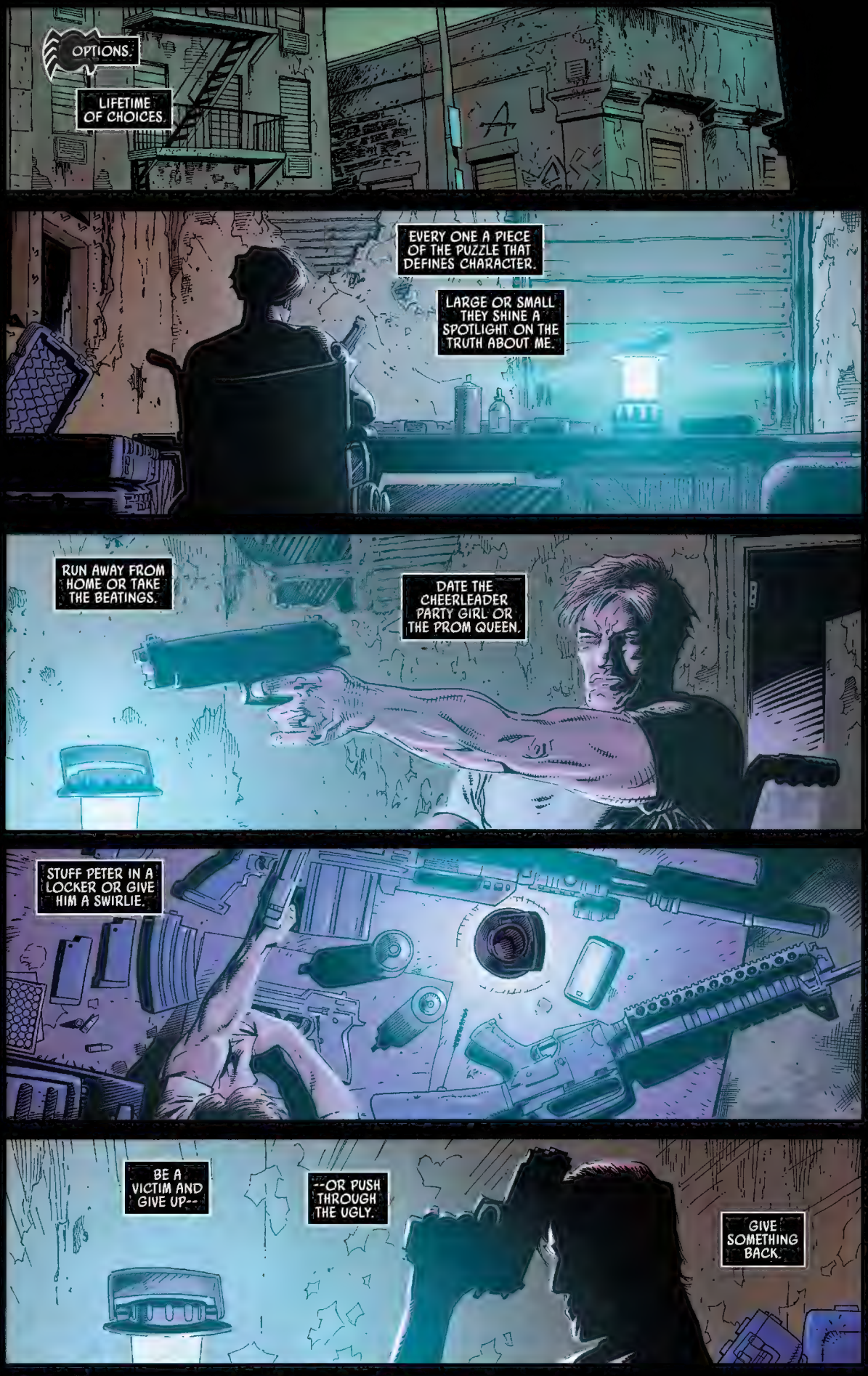






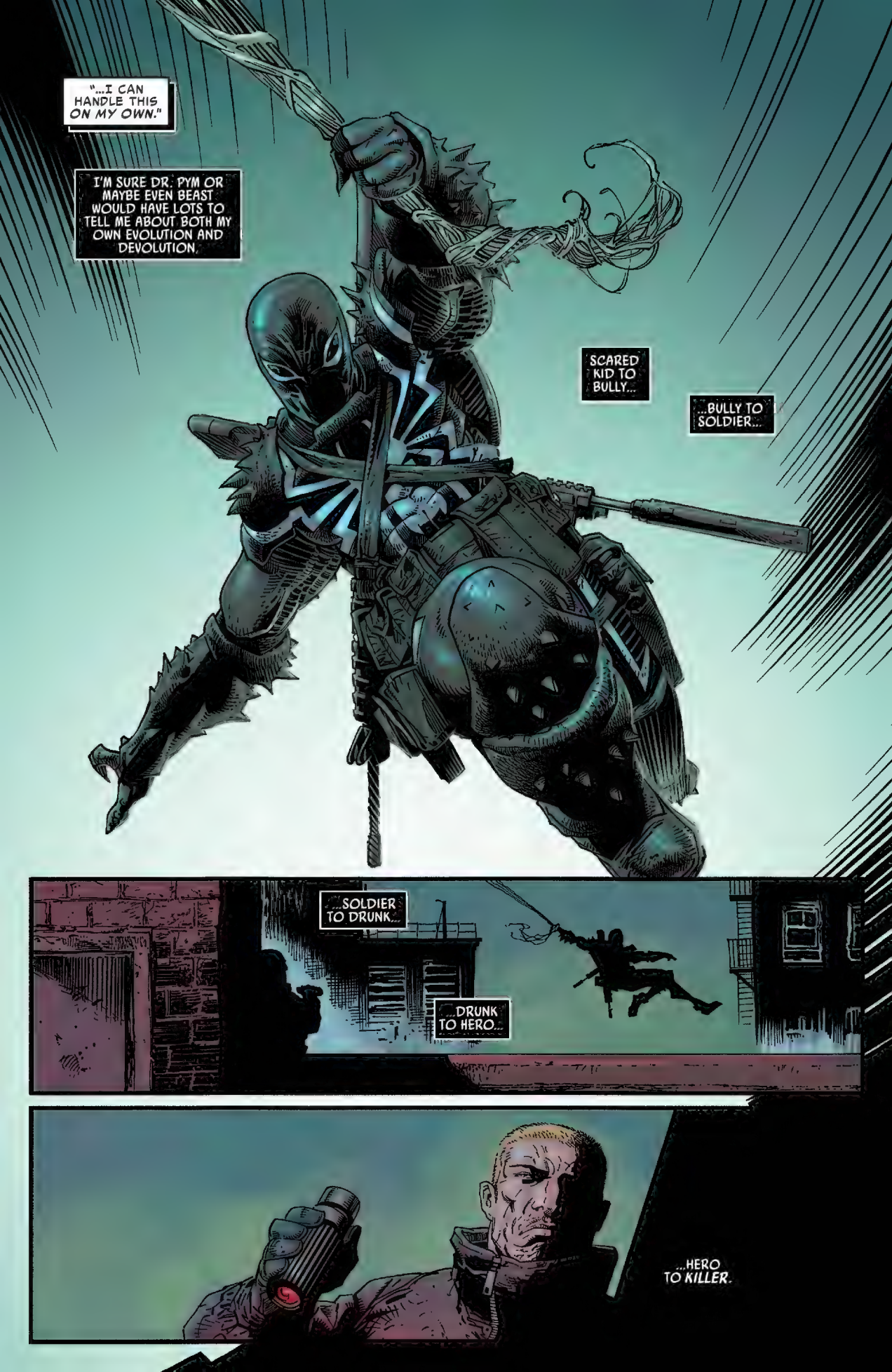
13 Variant by Walter Simonson & Laura Martin

17 "SAVAGE SIX: PROLOGUE"


OPTIONS.
LIFETIME OF CHOICES.
EVERY ONE A PIECE OF THE PUZZLE THAT DEFINES CHARACTER.
LARGE OR SMALL THEY SHINE A SPOTLIGHT ON THE TRUTH ABOUT ME.
RUN AWAY FROM HOME OR TAKE THE BEATINGS.
DATE THE CHEERLEADER PARTY GIRL OR THE PROM QUEEN.
STUFF PETER IN A LOCKER OR GIVE HIM A SWIRLIE.
BE A VICTIM AND GIVE UP--
--OR PUSH THROUGH THE UGLY.
GIVE SOMETHING BACK.

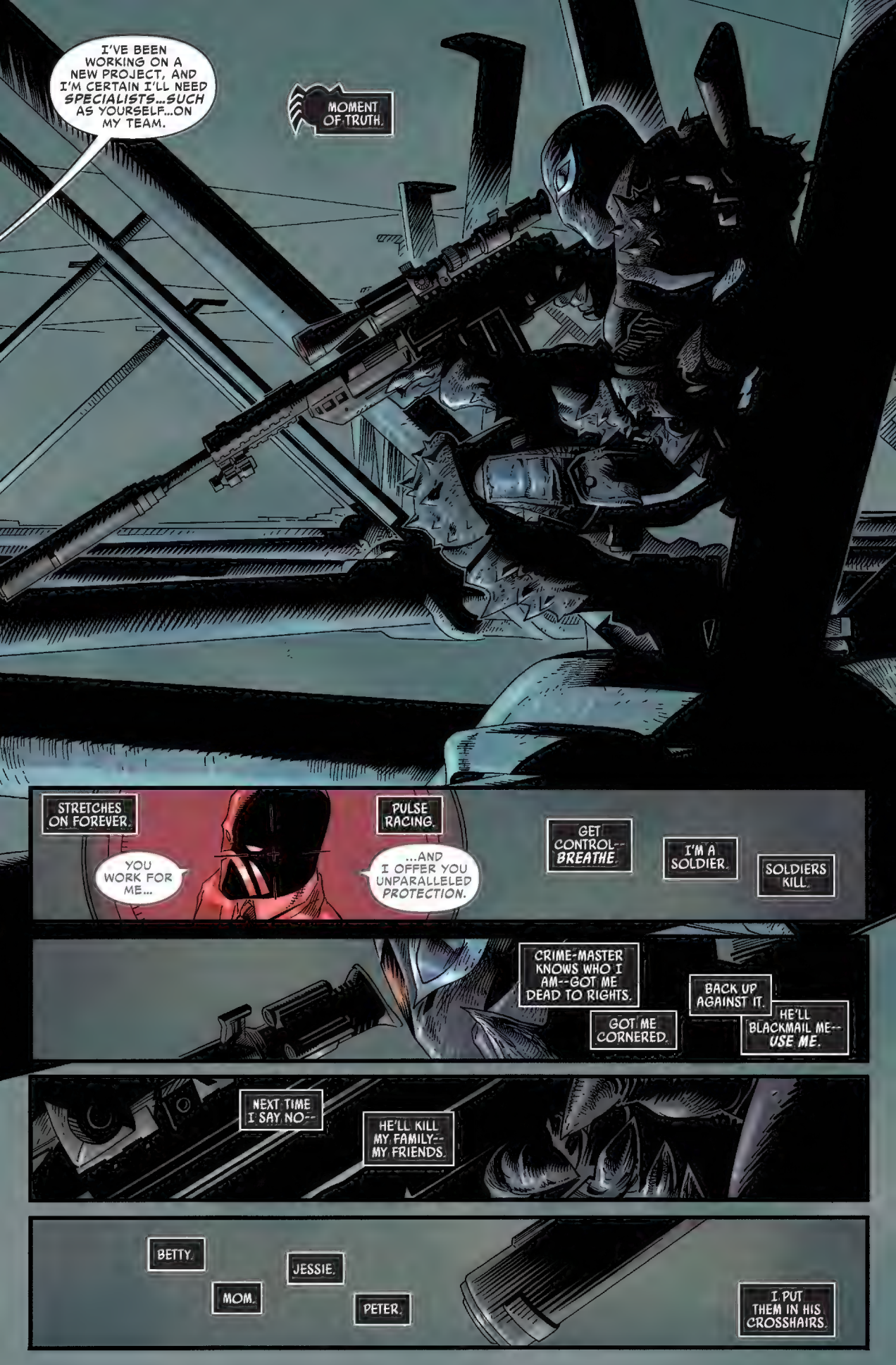
STAY WITH BETTY.
OR BREAK CLEAN AND SPARE HER SOME HEARTACHE DOWN THE LINE.
BETTY.
I USED TO HAVE OPTIONS.
BUT ALL THAT'S CHANGED.
FIGHT AS HARD AS I CAN.
BUT THERE'S ALWAYS A TRAIL OF WRECKAGE BEHIND ME.
AND NOW... NOW I'M AN AVENGER.
THIS COULD END THAT.
THIS COULD COST ME EVERYTHING.
PYM
BUT NO OTHER OPTION SOLVES THE PROBLEM.

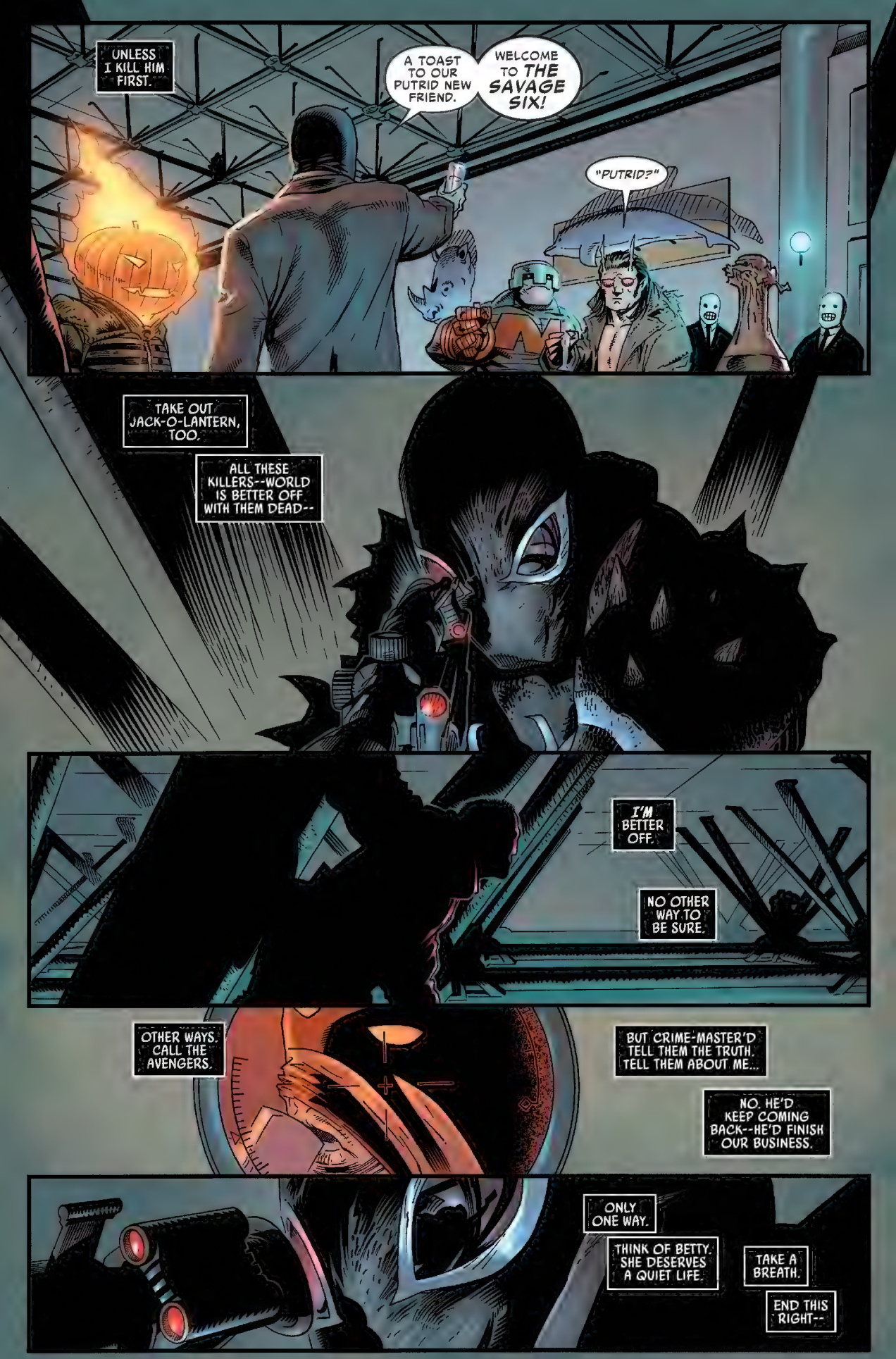
ONE HARD RESOLUTION.
THEN, AFTER THIS, FROM HERE ON OUT, I'M THE GOOD GUY...
...AFTER THIS ONE LAST HIT.
PYM HERE.
WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU, FLASH?
THE SUIT... THE...UH... SYMBIOTE.
I NEED IT.
EVERYTHING ALL RIGHT DOWN THERE?
COPS ARE CHASING A LOCAL THUG.
I THOUGHT I'D LEND A HAND IN ENDING IT PEACEFULLY.
SUIT'S ON THE WAY.
THOMPSON... YOU SURE YOU DON'T NEED ANY HELP WITH THIS?
NO...


"...I CAN HANDLE THIS ON MY OWN."
I'M SURE DR. PYM OR MAYBE EVEN BEAST WOULD HAVE LOTS TO TELL ME ABOUT BOTH MY OWN EVOLUTION AND DEVOLUTION.
SCARED KID TO BULLY...
...BULLY TO SOLDIER...
...SOLDIER TO DRUNK...
...DRUNK TO HERO...
...HERO TO KILLER.

"CRIME-MASTER.
"HE'S HERE, SIR."
DON'T JUST STAND THERE.
SEND THAT GLORIOUS FIEND IN.
CAUGHT A WHIFF ON HIS WAY IN, DADDY-O-- STI-NKY.
YEAH, SORRY 'BOUT THAT. AIN'T HAD TIME TO BATHE SINCE THE LAST VAGRANT I ATE.
WE WOULD EXPECT NO LESS OF THE HUMAN FLY.
I'M SO VERY GLAD YOU DECIDED TO JOIN US. HAVE A SEAT.
A SEAT? HA! NO. I HEARD ABOUT YOU. A REAL NUT. A KOOK.
PROBABLY GOT A PIT FILLED WITH SHARKS OR SOMETHING UNDER THE RUG.
GONNA JUST KEEP ABUZZIN' IF IT'S ALL THE SAME TO YOU.

PARANOID LIKE A DRUG ADDICT.
THE PIT'S FILLED WITH IRRADIATED BROWN RECLUSE SPIDERS, BY THE WAY.
AND SPEAKING OF RUGS, I'D APPRECIATE IF YOU AVOID DROOLING ON IT. IT'S GENUINE BABY SEAL.
WHERE ARE MY MANNERS?
LET ME INTRODUCE YOU TO MY FRIENDS.
I BELIEVE YOU ALREADY KNOW *MEGATAK* AND *DEATH ADDER* FROM YOUR TIME WITH THE HOOD'S CREW.
AND MY RIGHT-HAND MAN, *JACK*.
JUST *YOU* CALL ME JACK, BOSS MAN.
HE CAN USE THE WHOLE *O'LANTERN*.
RIIIIIGHT.
SO.
GOOD.
NICE TIMES. GOOD MEETINGS.
WHAT *DO* YOU WANT?
MUST BE NICE TO BE *WANTED*.
WANTED BY THE AUTHORITIES. *WANTED* BY THE KINGPIN.
BUSY LITTLE FLY.
A MAN WHO MIGHT *WANT* SOME FRIENDS.
SO THIS IS A FRIEND PARTY? HUG-BATHS, RAINBOW PONIES, BUTTERSCOTCH WATERFALLS?
CUT THE GIBBERISH, KOOK.
FINE. CUTTING.
NOW, I'M A *BUSINESSMAN*, MR. DEACON, AND I RECOGNIZE THE VALUE OF A LITTLE *QUID PRO QUO*.


I'VE BEEN WORKING ON A NEW PROJECT, AND I'M CERTAIN I'LL NEED *SPECIALISTS...SUCH* AS YOURSELF...ON MY TEAM.
MOMENT OF TRUTH.
STRETCHES ON FOREVER.
YOU WORK FOR ME...
PULSE RACING.
...AND I OFFER YOU UNPARALLELED *PROTECTION.*
GET CONTROL-- *BREATHE.*
I'M A SOLDIER.
SOLDIERS KILL.
CRIME-MASTER KNOWS WHO I AM--GOT ME DEAD TO RIGHTS.
GOT ME CORNERED.
BACK UP AGAINST IT.
HE'LL BLACKMAIL ME-- *USE ME.*
NEXT TIME I SAY NO--
HE'LL KILL MY FAMILY-- MY FRIENDS.
BETTY.
JESSIE.
MOM.
PETER.
I PUT THEM IN HIS CROSSHAIRS.


UNLESS I KILL HIM FIRST.
A TOAST TO OUR PUTRID NEW FRIEND.
WELCOME TO THE SAVAGE SIX!
"PUTRID?"
TAKE OUT JACK-O-LANTERN, TOO.
ALL THESE KILLERS--WORLD IS BETTER OFF WITH THEM DEAD--
I'M BETTER OFF.
NO OTHER WAY TO BE SURE.
OTHER WAYS. CALL THE AVENGERS.
BUT CRIME-MASTER'D TELL THEM THE TRUTH. TELL THEM ABOUT ME...
NO. HE'D KEEP COMING BACK--HE'D FINISH OUR BUSINESS.
ONLY ONE WAY.
THINK OF BETTY. SHE DESERVES A QUIET LIFE.
TAKE A BREATH.
END THIS RIGHT--

HHN!
ZZZZZZZZZZZZZZ
B-BLAM!
BLAM!
GET DOWN!
PING!
SNKG!
BROCK!
LOOK AT YOU. BLOODTHIRSTY KILLER.
JUST LIKE I TOLD YOU, RIGHT?
THAT SYMBIOTE MUST BE ANNIHILATED!
THE WORLD MUST BE CLEANSED OF ITS BLIGHT.
BLAM!
BLAM!
SONIC BULLETS--
SCEEEEEEE
SCEEEEEEE
PYM'S MEDICINE IS KEEPING THE SYMBIOTE DOCILE--BUT IT REACTS.
ARRGH!

SITUATION DETERIORATING--
--OUT OF CONTROL--
--MOVE-- CLEAN IT UP.
THWIP!
IF YOU LET HIM GET AWAY--
--HE'LL NEVER STOP UNTIL--
I DON'T HAVE TIME FOR YOU, BROCK!
THWIPP!
GAA-- YOU CAN'T STOP ME, BOY. I'M THE HAND OF GOD!
I'LL KILL YOU BO--
TWONG!
EDDIE'S DOWN.
END THIS NOW--
--HAIL MARY SHOT--
BLAP BLAP BLAP BLAP BLAP BLAP

PNG
SNKK
SNNG
PNGK
PLKK
YOU FACE THE POWER OF ACTUALIZED PROGRAMMING.
THE BINARY LANGUAGE OF THE COSMOS COLLECTED, MADE REAL.
REAL LIFE TETRIS...
SOME SORT OF SHIELD--HAVE TO GET CLOSER--
NEVER GET ANOTHER CHANCE.
GO--
--SNAP HIS DAMNED NECK--
--KILL THEM ALL.
WHEN YOU TOLD ME YOU'D HIRED A LIVING COMPUTER PROGRAM, I THOUGHT YOU'D BEEN EATING MY BLOTTER BUTTER-SCOTCHES, BUT THAT STUPID-LOOKING NUT'S PRETTY HANDY.
GOOD.
SHUT UP.
FLY!!!
KILL WHATEVER STUPID SON OF A BITCH IS SHOOTING AT ME AND YOU'LL HAVE ALL THE PEOPLE YOU CAN GOBBLE!
GO-- EARN YOUR MEAT!
FINE.
BUT NO MORE STINK JOKES.

EUGENE! BUDDY! I KNEW IT!

I KNEW YOU JUST COULDN'T LEAVE WELL ENOUGH ALONE!

YOU KNOW WHAT I GOTTA DO TO BETTY NOW, RIGHT?

YOU PIECE OF--

DOOOOM

BLAM BLAM BLAM

WE WUV MURDER!

WE PWARTY IN BWUDD!

WE EAT BWAINS-- GAA!

LOOK WHO IT IS!

THE CHUMP WHO BROKE ME OUTTA JAIL TO SAVE A SON I AIN'T GOT!*

* LAST ISSUE. --SOME INTERN.

SO FAST--
IT'S IMPOSSIBLE--
YEEAAAGH!
THWIPP
DID THIS-- BROKE TRUCE... R-RED IS A... IT'S NOW A BIRD.
IT'S HERE NOW... NO...THAT'S NONSENSE...
WE WERE GONNA LEAVE YOU ALONE, EUGENE.
WE REALLY WERE. YOU BROKE THE TRUCE.
SHRDD
--DON'T LISTEN--
DON'T THINK ABOUT WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU FAIL--
RHAA--!
POISON. FREAK'S CLAWS ARE POISONED.
GLOP!
FOCUS... THERE IS NO BIRD...
DIZZY.

WELL, HELLO, MR. THOMPSON.
OOF--!
THWUDD
Y-YOU WANT TO KILL ME-- DO IT.
JUST YOU...YOU AND ME...LEAVE EVERYONE ELSE OUT.
LITTLE LATE TO REOPEN NEGOTIATIONS, DON'T YOU THINK, SPORT?
BUT I'M NOTHING IF NOT REASONABLE.
MAYBE I'LL ONLY KILL YOUR MOM IN QUEENS.
KEEP TALKING.
KEEP RUNNING YOUR DAMNED MOUTH--
SO I CAN PUT A BULLET IN IT--
KA-WHOOM
HNNF!

FUMBLED THE BALL.
GRINDING SOUND IN MY CHEST.
--LUNGS WON'T TAKE AIR--
I THINK BETTY IS NEXT, EUGENE.
DIE KNOWING I WILL SOON DEFILE HER CORPSE.
GO ON, MEGATAK--
KILL HIM.
TWOK
--NO WIN--
GET CLEAR--
THWP
--GET MY BEARINGS--
IF I DIE HE'LL KILL THEM--
GET OUT OF HERE.
PROTECT THEM.

"WELL, HE'S GONE."
UP AN' SLIPPED AWAY, BOSS. TWO GUESSES WHERE HE WENT.
WE LUV TO BWIND HIS EYES.
BUT MAN, YOU SHOULD SEE WHAT HE FORGOT.
OH, EUGENE. YOU JUST EXCRETE BAD LUCK.
GOOD NEWS-- TONIGHT'S NOT A TOTAL BUST AFTER ALL.
CUT HIM DOWN.
DEATH ADDER, WOULD YOU BE A DEAR AND PREPARE LAB NUMBER 5?
FUN-FUN-FUN.

WAKEY, WAKEY, BROCK.
W-WHERE?
W-WHAT IS T-THIS?
RELAX, EDWARD. AIN'T THAT KIND O' PARTY.
YOU KNOW, WHEN I FIRST ENCOUNTERED OUR MUTUAL FRIEND, AGENT VENOM, I SAW RIGHT THOUGH HIS SUPER HEROICS.
AND DO YOU KNOW WHAT I SAW?
I SAW PROFIT.
I IMMEDIATELY SET OUT TO FIND AND MONETIZE ONE OF THESE ALIEN SYMBIOTES.
AFTER ALL...CRIMINAL ORGANIZATIONS...TERROR CELLS...MILITARY CONTRACTORS... WILL ALL PAY THROUGH THE NOSE FOR SUCH A WEAPON.
OF COURSE, THANKS TO YOUR GENOCIDAL CRUSADE, PICKINGS HAVE BEEN SOMEWHAT SLIM.
HSSSSSSS
BUT OUR SEARCH HAS NOT BEEN WITHOUT RESULTS.
AND NOW THAT WE HAVE OUR SYMBIOTE, WE ONLY NEED ONE THING.
BIOHAZARD

A HOST...
N-NO!
NEEEAAAAAGGHH!
PLEASE, GOD!
NOT AGAIN!
NOT--
RRRRAAA AAA!
SO, EDDIE... HOW DO YOU FEEL?
WHAT WOULD YOU AND YOUR NEW FRIEND MOST LIKE TO DO?

KILL--
--VENOM!
KEV + TERRY

"SAVAGE SIX: PART 1 – PUBLIC ENEMIES" *18*

NO SIGN OF A STRUGGLE.
THEY HAVEN'T BEEN HERE.
BUT NEITHER HAS BETTY.
C'MON--PICK UP--
PLEASE, GOD--
HEY! THIS IS BETTY. LEAVE A MESSAGE AT THE BEEP.
PICK UP THE DAMNED PHONE!
FIND HER.
BEFORE THEY DO.
BEFORE THEY KILL HER.
HEY! THIS IS BETTY. LEAVE A--
UNLESS THEY'VE ALREADY FOUND HER.
DAMMIT!
UNLESS SHE'S ALREADY DEAD.
BECAUSE OF ME. BECAUSE OF--
SMACK
COFFEE WITH PETER. EMPIRE JAVA 7:00 AM

EMPIRE JAVA
WHAT AM I GOING TO DO, PETE?
IT'S FLASH. AGAIN.
HE'S CALLED A DOZEN TIMES THIS MORNING.
WHEN WE WERE TOGETHER, I'D BE LUCKY TO GET A CALL.
APPARENTLY IF I WANTED HIM TO STAY IN TOUCH, ALL I HAD TO DO WAS BREAK THINGS OFF.
URMMM
MAYBE IF YOU TWO SAT DOWN AND...UGH. NEVER MIND.
YOU KNOW AS WELL AS ANYONE I'M THE LAST PERSON WHO SHOULD BE GIVING ROMANTIC ADVICE, BETTY.
HONESTY, FROM THE MOUTH OF A MAN? SHOCKING STUFF THERE, PARKER.
OKAY, BUT, DON'T LET THIS MAKE YOU BITTER.
YEAH, I KNOW. IT'S JUST--I'M SO DAMNED TIRED OF BEING LIED TO BY THE MEN IN MY LIFE.
WHAT IS IT ABOUT ME THAT ATTRACTS THESE LOSERS?
DON'T DO THAT.
NONE OF THIS IS YOUR FAULT.
FAULT OR NOT--IT'S TRUE.
MY OWN BROTHER, BENNETT, GOT HIMSELF KILLED BECAUSE OF GAMBLING DEBTS.
NED AND I DIDN'T GET ALONG DURING THE GOOD TIMES... AND THE GOOD TIMES DIDN'T LAST LONG.
AND FLASH...
GOD ONLY KNOWS WHAT FLASH IS INVOLVED WITH.

HAS HE...
HAS FLASH OFFERED ANY KIND OF EXPLANATION?
VRMMM
NOT ONE THAT MAKES SENSE.
MAYBE I SHOULD JUST GO AHEAD AND ASK THE SON OF A--
MAYBE.
PROBABLY.
BUT YOU SHOULD WAIT UNTIL YOU'RE A LITTLE LESS ANGRY.
GOD, PETER.
I DON'T KNOW IF I'LL EVER STOP BEING ANGRY WITH HIM FOR THIS.
GIVE HIM A CHANCE TO EXPLAIN.
FLASH HAS BEEN THROUGH A LOT LATELY.
I KNOW... AND I STILL DON'T HATE HIM ANY LESS.
I GUESS THAT'S HOW I KNOW IT'S REALLY OVER.
LOOK...I DON'T LIKE THE IDEA OF LEAVING YOU HERE BY YOURSELF, BUT--
I KNOW. IT'S A WORKDAY.
I NEED TO GET TO WORK ON MY NEW ARTICLE AS WELL.
THINK I MIGHT SIT HERE FOR A BIT, CAFFEINATE UP THE ENERGY.
THANKS FOR COMING, PETE.

YOU NEED ANYTHING--YOU KNOW WHERE TO FIND ME.
TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF.
WILL DO.
URMMM
call from
Flash
hompson
NOT NOW, FLASH.
NOT NOW.

I'LL HAVE A SMALL AMERICANA, PLEASE.
30¢
50¢
$1.00
THAT'LL BE $4.25, MA'AM.
THANKS, JUST A SECOND...
TELL YOU WHAT, MISS BRANT--
THIS ONE'S ON ME.
OH!
UM...
THANK YOU...?
JACK.
PEOPLE TEND TO REMEMBER ME BY MY FACE.

YOU'RE FLASH'S FRIEND... FROM...
THAT'S RIGHT. ARMY BUDDIES.*
THESE DAYS, HE'S MY SPONSOR.
*BETTY MET "JACK" IN VENOM #10--TOM
HOW'VE YOU BEEN?
IT'S KIND OF YOU TO ASK.
BIT OF A ROUGH PATCH RECENTLY.
BENDER IN VEGAS. HURT SOME PEOPLE.
Y'KNOW... LET THEM DOWN.
I COULD HAVE USED A FEW ENCOURAGING WORDS FROM FLASH, Y'KNOW, BUT HE'S BEEN A LITTLE HARD TO TRACK DOWN.
TELL ME ABOUT IT.
ACTUALLY, I WONDER IF WE MIGHT GO SOMEWHERE A LITTLE MORE PRIVATE...TO TALK.
IT'S ABOUT FLASH.
I'M NOT SURE I'M--
IT'S IMPORTANT, BETTY.
OW!
YOU'RE HURTING--

SMASH
DEAR GOD--
HE'S ALREADY FOUND HER.
WELL, POOPS.
HE TOUCHED HER.
OH, NO! IT'S THE TERRIBLE SUPER VILLAIN VENOM!
V-VENOM?
PUT HIS HANDS ON BETTY--
THIS WOMAN'S LIFE IS IN DANGER!

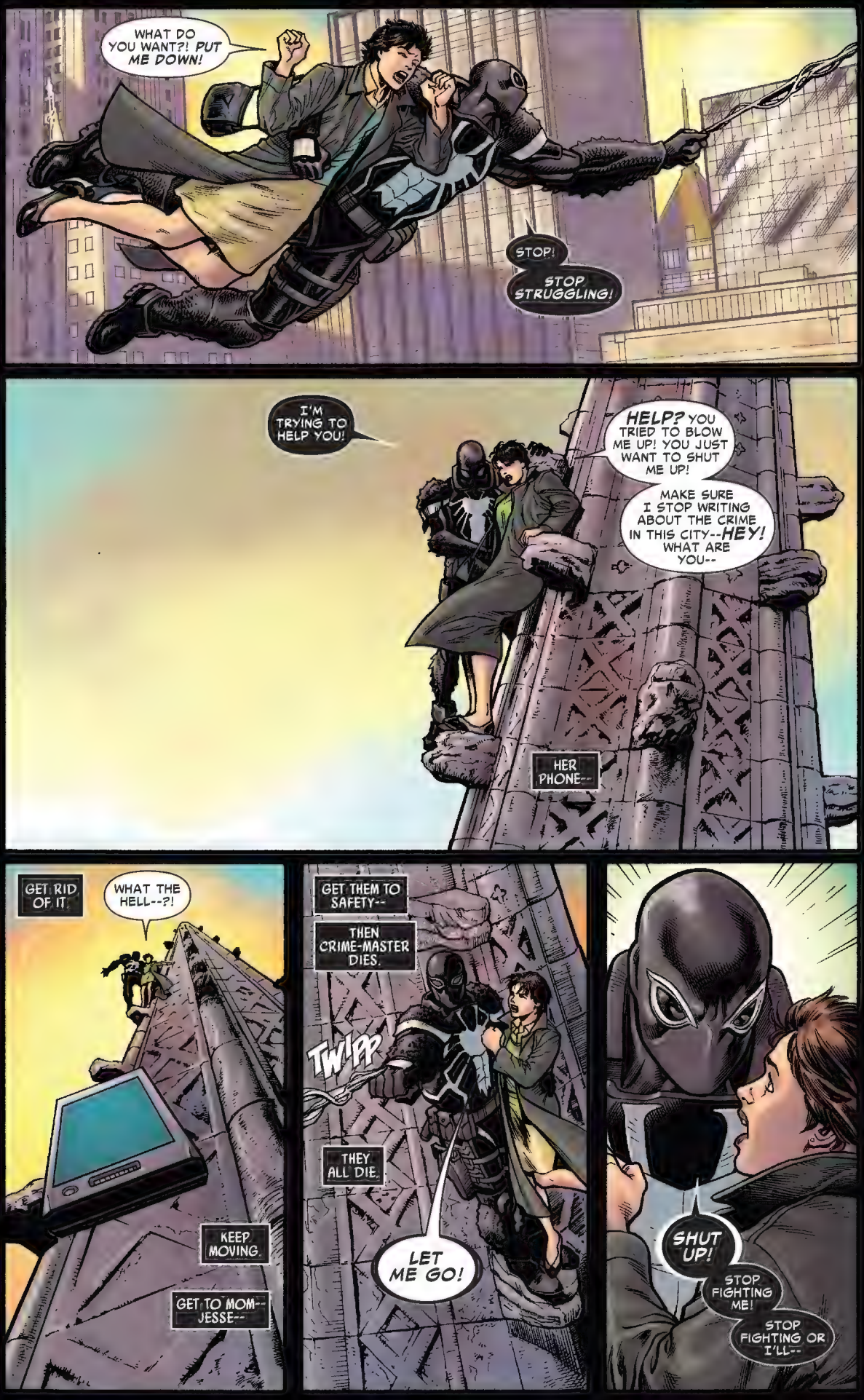
KREESH
YRGH!
LAST MISTAKE OF YOUR LIFE, YOU ROTTEN PIECE OF--
LEAVE HIM ALONE!
TWOK
BETTY'S VOICE-- SHE DOESN'T UNDERSTAND.
AFRAID OF ME.
THINKS I'M A KILLER.
SHE'S RIGHT.
SURE AS HELL GONNA KILL--
I SAID--
GET OFF HIM!
REEEEEEEEEEEEE
AAGGH!
SONIC PEPPER SPRAY.
SHE'S BEEN EXPECTING TO ENCOUNTER VENOM AGAIN--
SOMEONE GAVE HER THIS TO DEFEND HERSELF--
--AGAINST ME.

THING'S GOT PARKER'S SCIENCE GEEK FINGERPRINTS ALL OVER IT.
AHH!
PLEASE-- NO--!
GET OUT OF HERE!
RUN!
LETTING HER GO--A MISTAKE.
CRIME-MASTER WILL SEND THE OTHERS.
SHE'LL GET KILLED BY HERSELF.
GO--
PROTECT HER.
--SNAP HIS NECK FIRST.
YOUR GIRLFRIEND TRIED TO SAVE MY LIFE. SHE'S SWEET ON ME.
GONNA GIVE HER A DEEP KISS WHEN THIS IS ALL OVER.
PLENTY O' TONGUE.

HOW'D YOU FIND HER?!
KWOKK
GOT NEW FRIENDS NOW, EUGENE.
OUR OPERATION'S EXPANDING.
TWAMM
MEET MEGATAK.
UNNGH!
LOOKS LIKE A VIDEO GAME FROM THE '80s COME TO LIFE, RIGHT?
IT'S BECAUSE HE IS. HE'S A LIVING BOSS-LEVEL BADDIE.
KOOK'S GOT A REAL AFFINITY FOR ELECTRONICS.
COMPUTERS... VIDEO GAMES... CELL PHONES.

JACK'S HAVING FUN.
COCKY.
NOW... WHERE WERE WE?
OH, YEAH... MEGATAK'S GOING TO GO FIND BETTY AND--
HNNF!
THWIPP
THINKS IT'S A DONE DEAL.
THINKS HE CAN AFFORD TO TOY WITH ME.
WHICH MEANS HE WAS READY FOR ALL OF THIS.
PREMEDITATED.
KRAK
GET OUT OF HERE--FIND BETTY.
DON'T LEAVE HER SIDE.
CAN'T DO THIS ALONE.
THE AVENGERS. MAKE THE CALL--

SHKWAAM
OOF-!
GHHA-!
MEGATAK...JAMMED SIGNAL...
TURNING EVERY CELL PHONE INTO A LAND MINE.
WHUMPP
PSYCHOPATH IS TOYING WITH ME...
TOYING WITH BETTY...
...ALREADY A DOZEN STEPS AHEAD.
EXCUSE ME-- LOOK OUT-- PLEASE--
MOVE!
OH, GOD-- LET GO OF ME!
OKAY--NOW TO FIND JESSE AND MOM--
PRAY TO GOD I'M IN TIME.


WHAT DO YOU WANT?! PUT ME DOWN!
STOP!
STOP STRUGGLING!
I'M TRYING TO HELP YOU!
HELP? YOU TRIED TO BLOW ME UP! YOU JUST WANT TO SHUT ME UP!
MAKE SURE I STOP WRITING ABOUT THE CRIME IN THIS CITY--HEY! WHAT ARE YOU--
HER PHONE--
GET RID OF IT.
WHAT THE HELL--?!
KEEP MOVING.
GET TO MOM--JESSE--
GET THEM TO SAFETY--
THEN CRIME-MASTER DIES.
TWIPP
THEY ALL DIE.
LET ME GO!
SHUT UP!
STOP FIGHTING ME!
STOP FIGHTING OR I'LL--

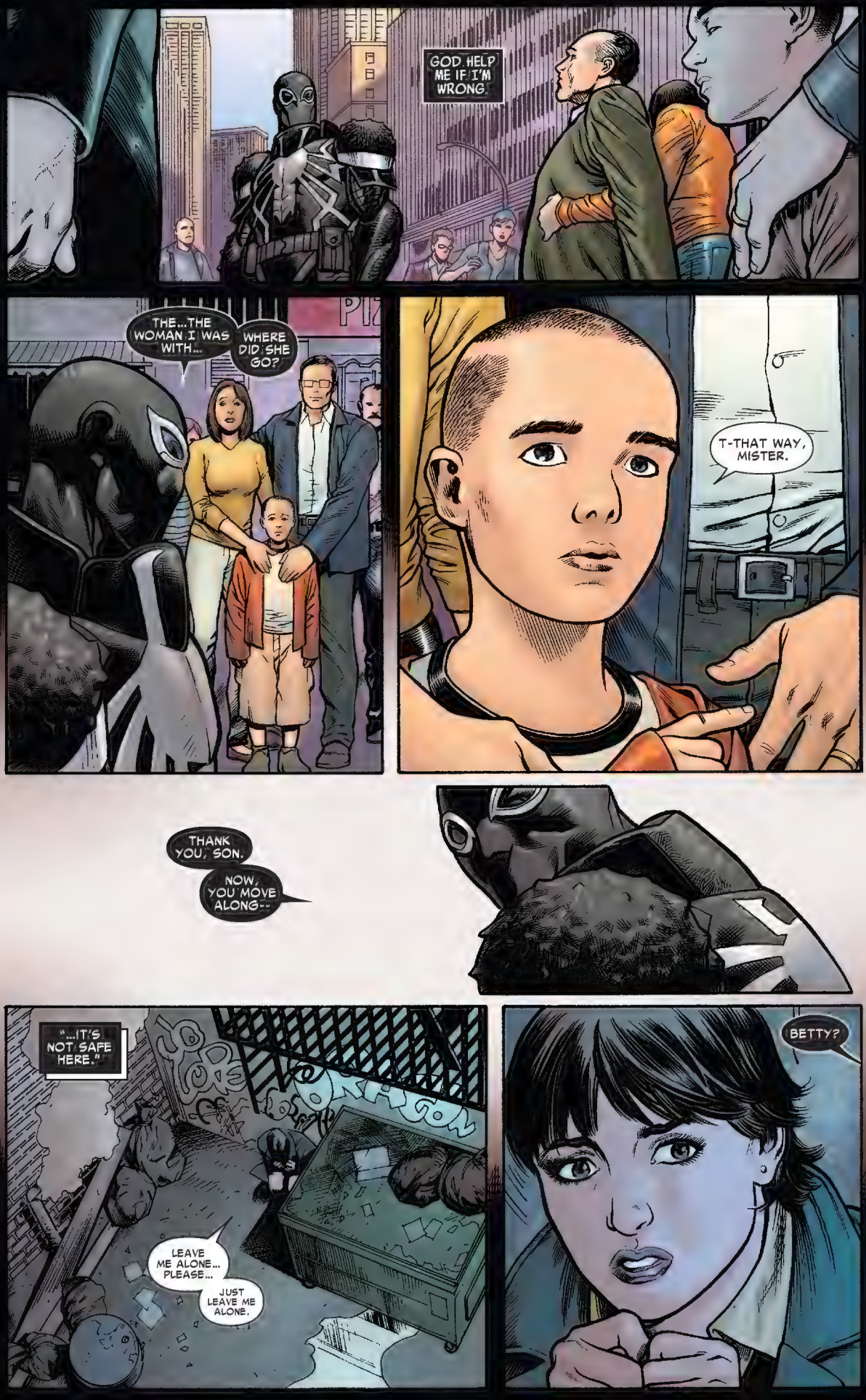
GET A HOLD OF YOURSELF.
I'M SORRY--YOU JUST HAVE TO TRUST ME.
I KNOW THAT'S CRAZY. I KNOW.
JUST TRUST ME.
CALM DOWN.
GET IT TOGETHER, DAMMIT.
YOU'RE SCARING HER.
YOU'RE NOT THINKING STRAIGHT
STARTING TO SOUND LIKE--
VENOM!
AIEEEE-!
TENDRILS-- RAZOR SHARP--
TWIST HARD-- BREAK HER FREE--

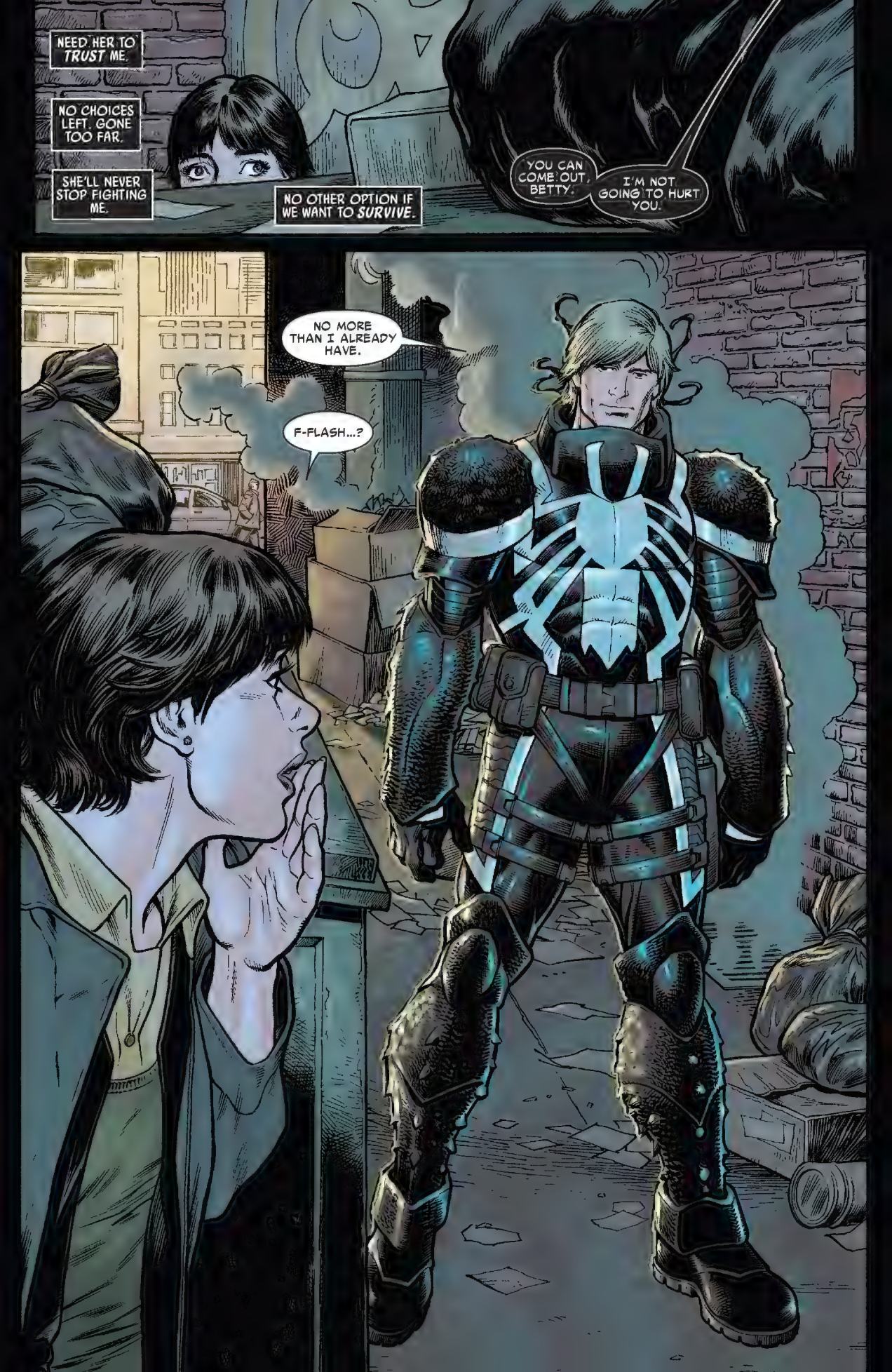
AAAAAAHHHH!
NO!
TOO FAST--
--DIDN'T EXPECT--
RELAX YOUR BODY!
SHE DOES.
SHE'S A TROUPER.
FIGHTS HER FEAR.
STRONGEST WOMAN I'VE EVER KNOWN.
SHE'S HAD TO BE.
ENDLESS TRIALS, ENDLESS MISFORTUNE...
...THE THING I SWORE I'D NEVER BE TO HER.
WHATEVER THAT WAS--IT'LL BE HERE SOON--
RUN!
ALL OF YOU! GET THE HELL OUT OF--
WE'VE COME FOR YOU, GRANDFATHER--

WE'VE COME FOR YOUR SOUL.
THE TOXIN SYMBIOTE--
BONDED TO SOMEONE NEW--
KROOOOOM
--SOMEONE WITH A GRUDGE.
ACK!
SCHOKK
NOT JUST SOMEONE--
YOU BETRAYED US!
TRIED TO BUTCHER US!
BUT WE ARE WHOLE AGAIN--
THAT VOICE... EDDIE.
EDDIE BROCK.
READY FOR YOU.
SLAM

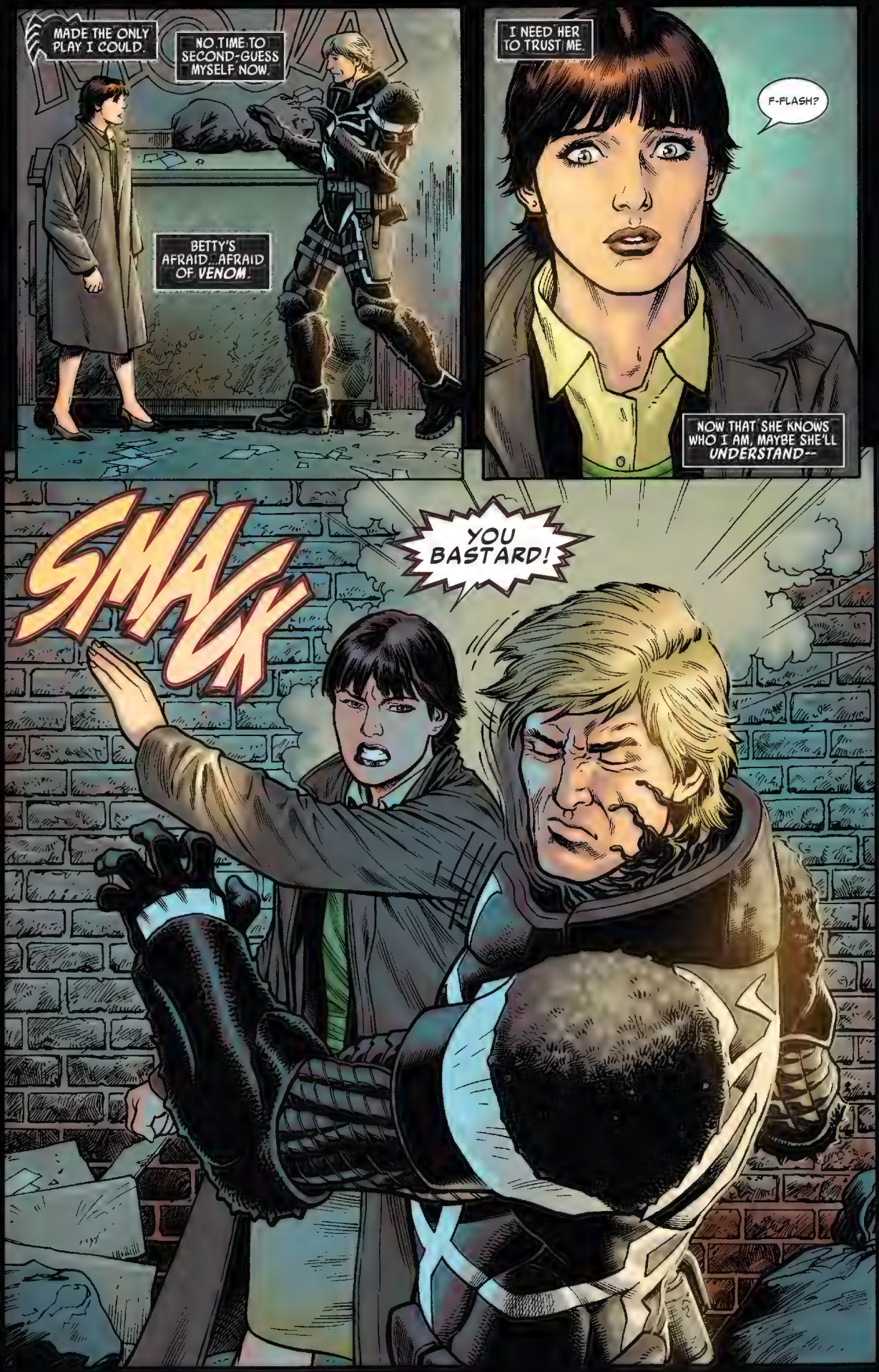
WHAT? WHERE ARE YOUR TEETH, GRANDFATHER? I SMELL THE DRUGS IN YOU...
YOU LET HIM NEUTER YOU.
EDDIE... WAIT...
WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU...MY FAULT... BUT...
YOU... THIS ISN'T YOU ANYMORE...
YOU'RE RIGHT.
IT'S US.
AND WE WILL BE THE ONLY ONE LEFT FOR THE SPAWNING.
DON'T KNOW WHAT THAT MEANS--
BUT I DON'T HAVE TIME TO DEAL WITH IT NOW.
YEEAAAARRRGGH!
REEEEEEEEEEE

THE SONIC CHARGE IS SPENT.
EDDIE... TOXIN...STILL WEAK...
PUT A BULLET IN HIS HEAD.
PUT AN END TO THIS DELUSIONAL PSYCHO.
N-NO...
NOT HIS FAULT.
IT'S MINE.
WRAP HIM UP.
THWIP
GET BETTY. GET OUT OF HERE--
TOXIN WANTS TO HURT ME... MY FAMILY...
...NOT THESE PEOPLE.
THIS WON'T HOLD HIM LONG!
GET OUT OF HERE--CALL 911, TELL THEM WHAT YOU SAW!


GOD HELP ME IF I'M WRONG.
THE...THE WOMAN I WAS WITH...
WHERE DID SHE GO?
T-THAT WAY, MISTER.
THANK YOU, SON.
NOW, YOU MOVE ALONG--
"...IT'S NOT SAFE HERE."
LEAVE ME ALONE... PLEASE...
JUST LEAVE ME ALONE.
BETTY?


NEED HER TO TRUST ME.
NO CHOICES LEFT. GONE TOO FAR.
SHE'LL NEVER STOP FIGHTING ME.
NO OTHER OPTION IF WE WANT TO SURVIVE.
YOU CAN COME OUT, BETTY.
I'M NOT GOING TO HURT YOU.
NO MORE THAN I ALREADY HAVE.
F-FLASH...?

19 "SAVAGE SIX: PART 2 – FAMILY"


MADE THE ONLY PLAY I COULD.
NO TIME TO SECOND-GUESS MYSELF NOW.
BETTY'S AFRAID...AFRAID OF VENOM.
I NEED HER TO TRUST ME.
F-FLASH?
NOW THAT SHE KNOWS WHO I AM, MAYBE SHE'LL UNDERSTAND--
SMACK
YOU BASTARD!

BETTY, I--
ALL THIS TIME, YOU'VE BEEN LEADING THIS...
THIS... DOUBLE LIFE.
THIS LIE.
I'M SORRY, BETTY.
BUT WE DON'T HAVE TIME RIGHT NOW.
YOU'RE IN DANGER--
BECAUSE OF ME.
--AND IF YOU DON'T STAY WITH ME, THOSE PEOPLE... THEY'RE GOING TO KILL YOU.
NO...
BETTY... THEY'RE GOING AFTER MY MOM... MY SISTER...
I'VE GOT TO STOP THEM.

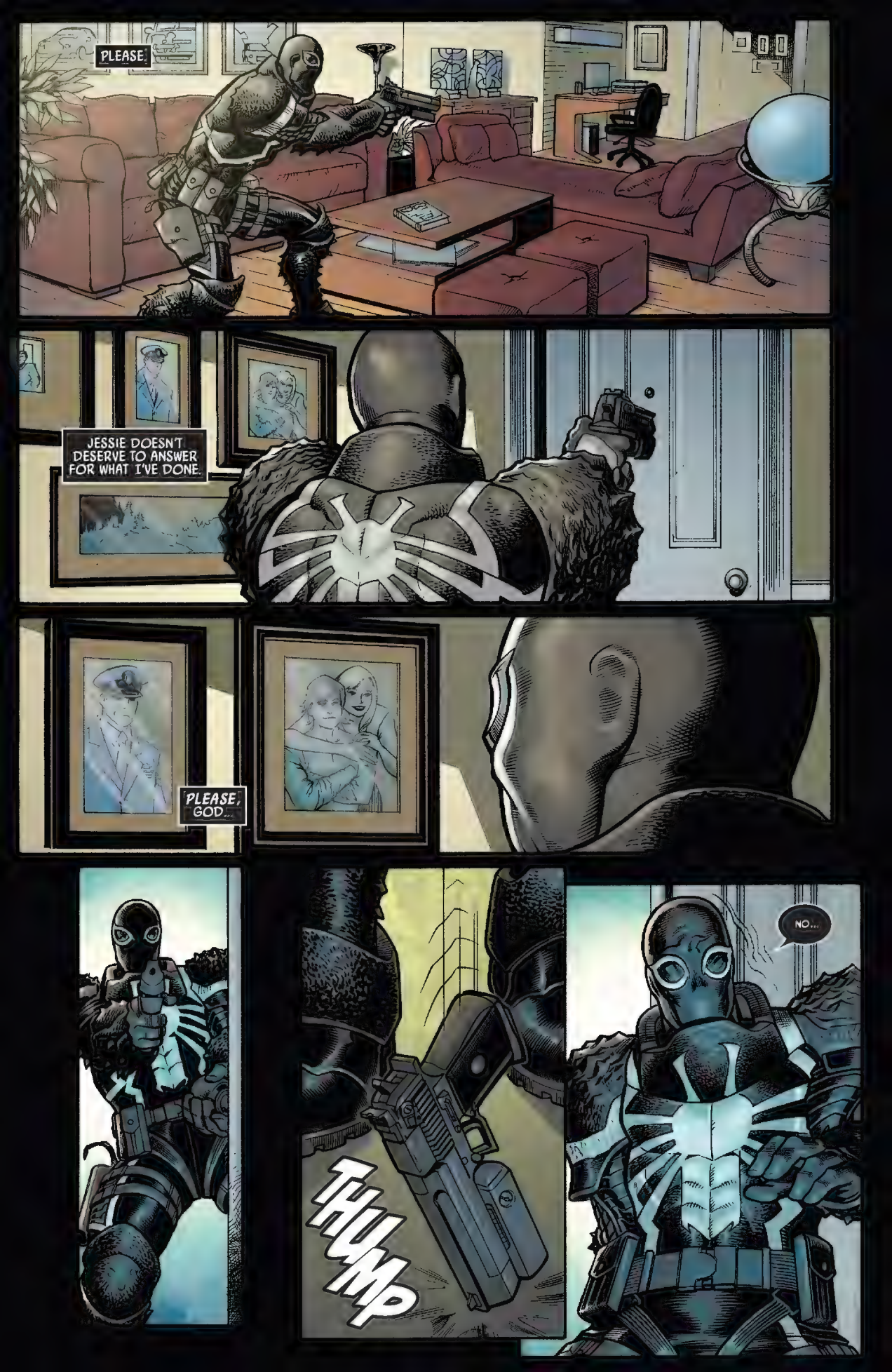
DAMN YOU, FLASH THOMPSON.

JESSIE'S PLACE IS CLOSER.
BUT I NEED TO CALL MY MOM. WARN HER.
THEY HACKED OUR PHONES.
TRYING TO CUT US OFF.
HEY!
THWIP
I...
I DON'T REMEMBER HER NUMBER--
I KNOW IT.

D-RIING
D-RING
HMMM?
D-RING
I WONDER WHO THAT COULD BE?
D-RING
D-RING
PLEASE...
TELL YOU WHAT, MOMMY DEAREST...
WHY DON'T WE JUST LET THAT GO STRAIGHT TO VOICEMAIL?
YOU AND ME ARE GONNA BE PLENTY BUSY.
D-RIIIIING

SHE'S NOT ANSWERING.
MAYBE SHE'S OUT.
GOD, I HOPE.
CAN YOU TRY JESSE?
I'LL HAVE TO USE DIRECTORY ASSISTANCE.
MAYBE--
ESCAPE IS IMPOSSIBLE.
YOUR SCENT LINGERS ON THE DATA STRINGS.
MEGATAK! DAMN! TOSS IT!
THEY MUST BE MONITORING THE LINES.
FLASH...
WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?
THE ONLY THING WE CAN DO--

--SURVIVE.
THAT'S IT. LIE TO HER.
KEEP HER CALM.
THIS IS JESSE'S APARTMENT. I NEED YOU TO STAY OUT HERE. LET ME CHECK IT OUT.
YOU HEAR ANYTHING, YOU RUN. DOWN THE FIRE ESCAPE.
CRIME-MASTER'S REALLY NAILED ME TO A WALL HERE.
I CAN'T EVEN REACH OUT TO THE AVENGERS.
IF THIS IS THE END FOR ME-- FINE.
FLASH...
BUT I'M NOT GOING TO LET THEM TAKE MY FAMILY.
STAY. HERE.
OKAY... OKAY.
...THANK YOU.


PLEASE.
JESSIE DOESN'T DESERVE TO ANSWER FOR WHAT I'VE DONE.
PLEASE, GOD...
THUMP
NO...

JESSIE'S HUSBAND.
JACK O'LANTERN MUST'VE COME STRAIGHT HERE WHILE I WAS DEALING WITH TOXIN...
WHILE I WAS WITH BETTY...
THE LANTERN MADE SHORT WORK OF HIM.
HEAD SPINNING.
MY FAULT.
IF I HAD COME HERE FIRST...

W-WHO'S THERE?
JESSIE...
WHO IS THAT?
SHE'S ALIVE!
I DON'T KNOW HOW, BUT SHE MANAGED TO--
N-NO.
SHE COULDN'T HAVE GOTTEN THROUGH THIS UNSCATHED.
JACK WOULD'VE DONE SOMETHING TO HER.
DON'T WANT TO SEE THIS.
FLASH? IS THAT YOU?
HOW DID SHE--

HIYA, FLASH!
YOUR SISTER SURE LIKED TO PLAY WOUGH!
WE WUV TO SWAWWOW HER SOUL!
WE WUV TO CARVE OUT WUVER-BOY'S BWAINS!
JESSE'S VOICE.
JACK'S LITTLE DEVIL DOLLS.
MIMICKING MY SISTER'S VOICE.
MESSING WITH MY HEAD.
PLAYING GAMES WITH ME.
I'M DONE PLAYING GAMES!
SMASH
NO FAIR! NO FFFF--
SSCCCRRRREEEE!
CR-CHOCK

YOU'RE NOT PLAYING VEWY NICELY.
WE BWEAK YOUR SISTER'S BOY TOY AND YOU BWEAK US!
WE'RE TAKING OUR TOYS AND GOING HOME!
AND YOU CAN GO STRAIGHT TO HELL!
BEEP
BETTY!
BEEP

BOOOM
FLASH...
WHERE'S JESSE?
THEY GOT TO HER.

MY GUESS IS SHE'S--
SMOKE TRAIL.
JACK O'LANTERN. HE RETURNED TO WATCH THE SHOW.
HE'S NOT GOING TO GET AWAY.
WAIT HERE.
CAN'T TAKE CHANCES WITH THIS SONOFABITCH.
AS SOON AS I GET HIM IN MY SIGHTS...
KILL SHOT.
NO HESITATION THIS TIME.

JESSIE!
SHE'S ALIVE!
THERE'S STILL A CHANCE...
LOOK AT US, EUGENE.
BOTH OF US HAVE *HOT DATES*... AND WE LEAVE THEM ON ROOFTOPS SO WE CAN *DANCE* WITH EACH OTHER.
BOO!
YEEAAGGHH!
THIS MUST BE *TRUE LOVE*, HUH?

BUT DON'T WORRY.
ONCE I'M DONE WITH YOU, I'LL TAKE GOOD CARE OF 'EM.
I DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOU, BUT A LITTLE GIRL-GIRL-HOMICIDAL MANIAC ACTION ALWAYS CHEERS ME UP.
NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS TO ME, JACK DOESN'T WALK AWAY FROM THIS.
HE'LL NEVER TOUCH MY SISTER...
NEVER TOUCH BETTY...
BLAM BLAM BLAM
HRRRK!
BLAM

OH, EUGENE. YOU'RE ALL FIRED UP, AREN'T YOU?
WE CAN'T LET GIRLS COME BETWEEN US LIKE THIS.
WHATEVER HAPPENED TO BROS BEFORE--
SHUT UP!
BLAM BLAM
FWOOOOSH
AIN'T OVER 'TIL DADDY SAYS IT'S OVER.
YERGH!
HRRR... HHRR...
BUT YOUR SISTER, ON THE OTHER HAND.
OH, HER GOOSE IS OFFICIALLY COOKED.

UNNNF!
CAN BARELY SEE...
EYES BURNING...
DOESN'T MATTER...
HAVE TO SAVE--
I REMEMBER THIS STORY ABOUT HOW OL' WEB-HEAD COULDN'T SAVE SOME PRETTY GIRL FROM A TERRIBLE FALL.
IF THE REAL DEAL COULDN'T SAVE SOME SKIRT...
...HOW COULD YOU?
JESSIE!

JESS?
JESSIE?!
I... OH...
HELP!
BRAVO, AGENT VENOM. BRAVO. YOU SAVED THE GIRL!
BUT I WONDER IF YOU CAN MANAGE A *REPEAT PERFORMANCE.*

FLASH!
FLAAAAAAAASH--
CAN'T LEAVE JESSIE.
OOOOH. TOUGH BREAK, HUH?
I'VE GOTTA BE GOING NOW.
BULLET HOLES TO PATCH. GIRLS TO SLAUGHTER.
JUST ONE LAST QUESTION BEFORE I GO.
"HAVE YOU VISITED MOM RECENTLY?"

"SAVAGE SIX: PART 3 – THE TRUTH" *20*

Queens.
IT'S A TRAP.
JACK WOULDN'T KILL MOM OR BETTY.
NOT LIKE THIS.
NO--HE'D WANT ME TO WATCH.
SENDING ME HERE--PART OF SOME GAME.
JUST A TRAP--PART OF A BIGGER PLAN.
WHY ELSE GRAB BETTY? WHY NOT KILL HER?
I WAS RIGHT THERE.
AND JESSE--JESSE WAS A DISTRACTION. BETTY WAS THE PRIZE.
MENTIONED MOM TO THROW ME OFF THE SCENT--
SIDETRACK ME.
HE WOULDN'T KILL HER.
ONE OF THE OTHERS WOULD.
HUMAN FLY. DEATH ADDER.
THEY'D KILL YOUR MOTHER.
WOULD NOT THINK TWICE.
AND IF THEY DID--IF YOU FIND HER DEAD--

IT'S ALL ON YOU.
GONE.
BUT THEY'RE BOTH GONE. MOM MAY BE ALIVE.
STILL PLAYING THE GAME.
THANK GOD.
ACIDIC VOMIT.
THE HUMAN FLY.
KILL HIM. KILL THAT SON OF A--
YERAGH--!
SKRRRT!!!

DEATH ADDER. LEFT HIM HERE--
LEFT HIM TO TAKE HIS SHOT--
GOOD.
SOMEONE TO PAY FOR THIS.
DAMMIT-- POISON IN THOSE CLAWS--
ALREADY COURSING... THROUGH... BANANA TIME.
LIKE THE OLDIES.
SHOULD'VE PAID THE ELECTRIC BILL.
BOOM

CIRCUS WON'T BE BACK IN TIME...
ATTENTION!
PAY... ATTENTION!
POISON-- WORKS FAST.
DIZZY--
--LIGHTS LIKE THE CIRCUS--
FIGHTING BLIND--NO AIM--
NEVER HIT HIM WITH ONE OF THESE--
SO HIT HIM WITH A DOZEN.

SWING 'EM *FAST*-- BLIND--

--EVERY DIRECTION--

WHEN THEY *STOP*--MEANS THEY'VE *STUCK*.

--BASTARD'S STILL SILENT-- DOESN'T MAKE A SOUND--

BUT I CAN FEEL HIM SCREAMING--

SMASH!

--AND HE'S JUST *BEGUN*.

TWICK

HKK!

CHOKING ME.

SYMBIOTE INSTINCTIVELY THICKENS AROUND THE NECK.

ITS INSTINCT? OR *MINE*?

WHAT *THE HELL* IS GOING ON IN HERE?

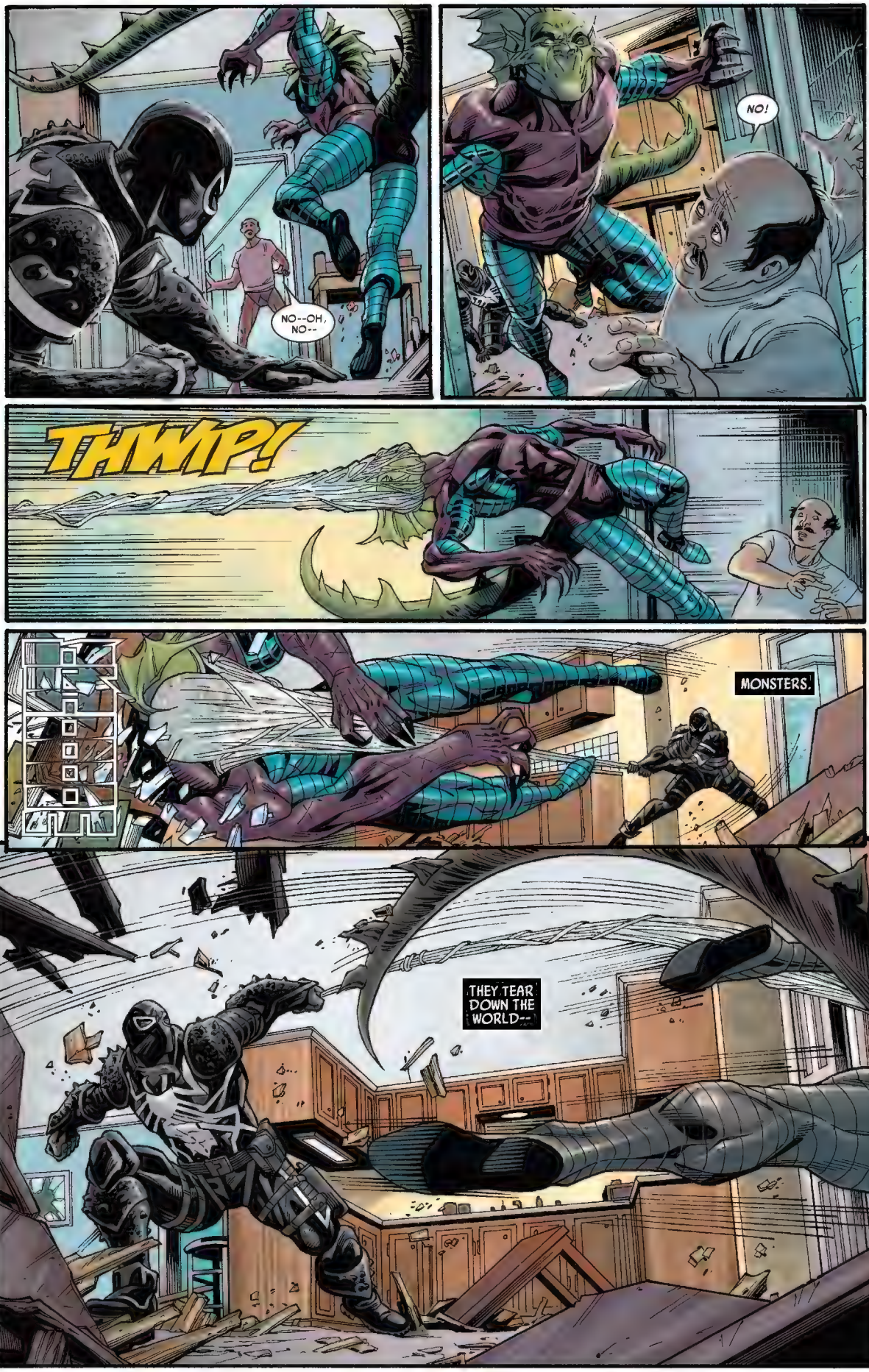
DIDN'T I ALREADY TELL YOU ABOUT THE *DAMNED* NOISE--

OH... *GOD*!

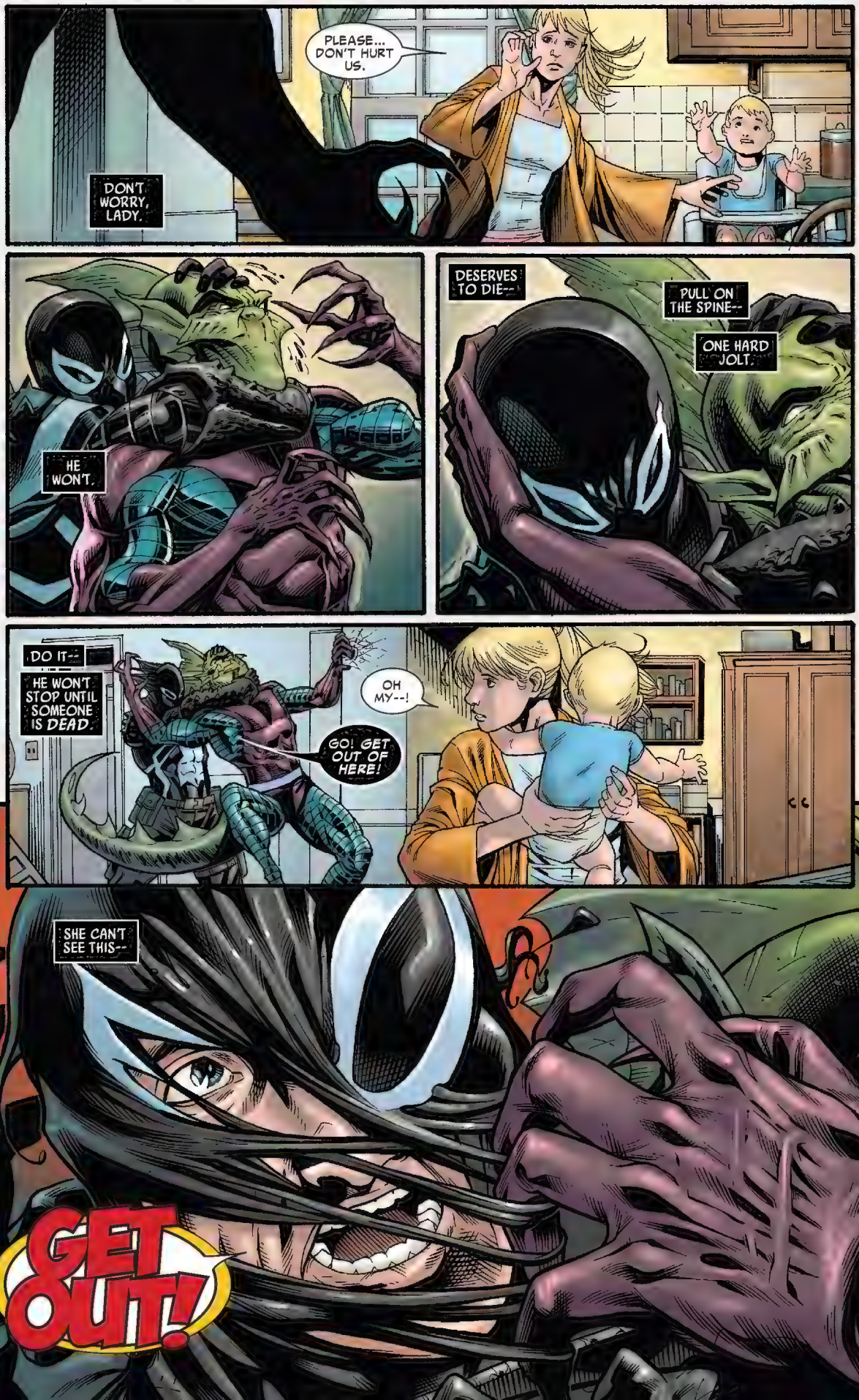
CALL 9-1-1! CALL 9-1-1!

HOLY--

POISON--
HE'S ALL TRACERS AND BLUR--
FASTER THAN I CAN TRACK. NO WAY TO LOCK IN--
SKRAK
GHRA--!
GET YOUR HEAD TOGETHER--
FIGURE IT OUT--
YOU DIE HERE--SO DOES MOM.
SO DOES BETTY.
HEART POUNDING--
--POISON SPREADS--
OH--OH, GOD--!
--SO MANY SOUNDS--
FLY'S ACID PUKE--
STINKS--
THE CIRCUS IS ALWAYS HERE--
ALWAYS FUN--NEVER SAD--
STINKS--
WAKE UP!
YHERAGHH!
FSSSHSSSSHHSSSSHH


NO--OH, NO--
NO!
THWIP!
MONSTERS.
THEY TEAR DOWN THE WORLD--

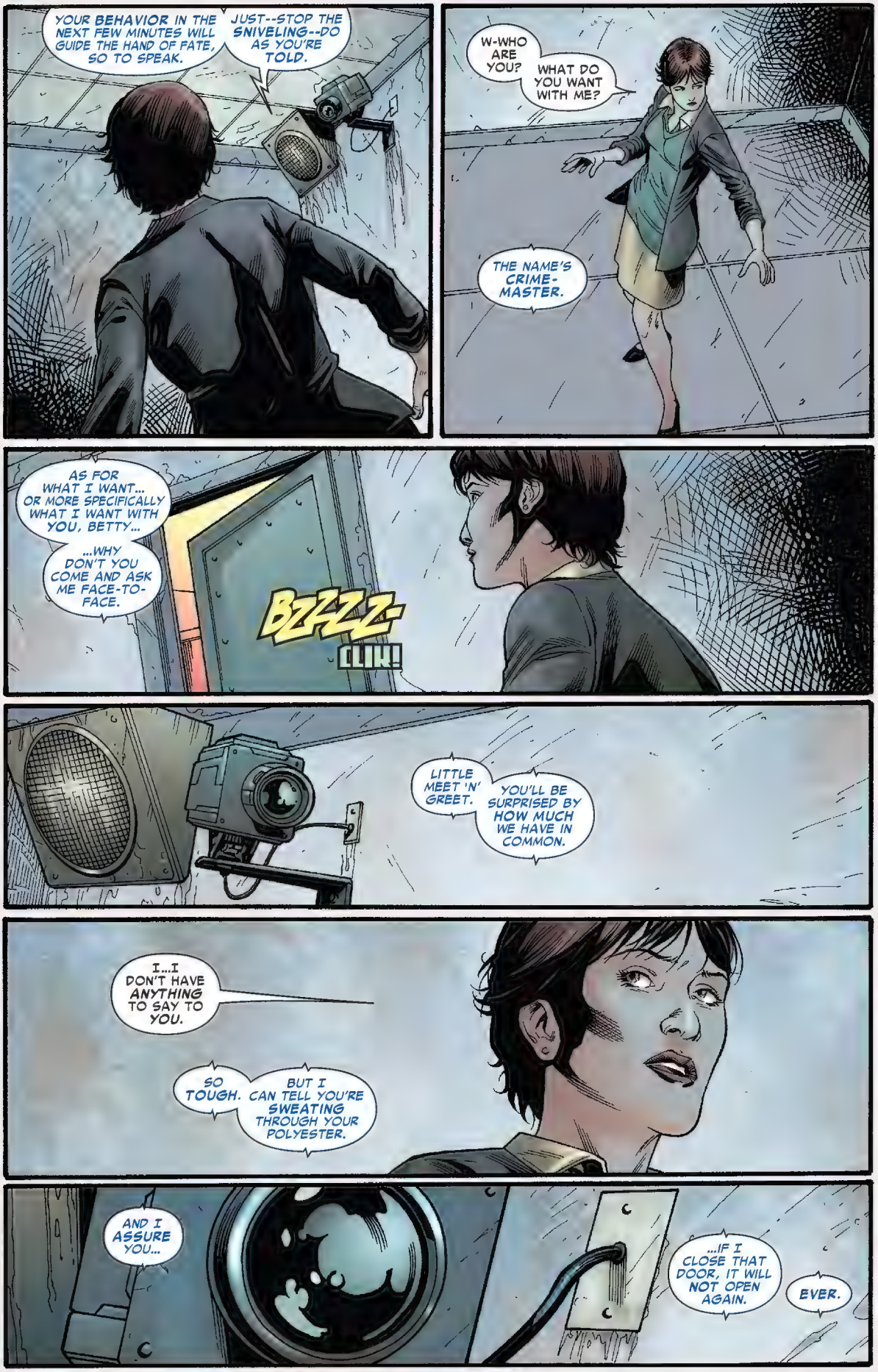
SHADOW
--HURT PEOPLE--
--SPREAD HORROR--
NO REASON TO LIVE--
WHRNCH
NO REASON TO SUFFER HIM--

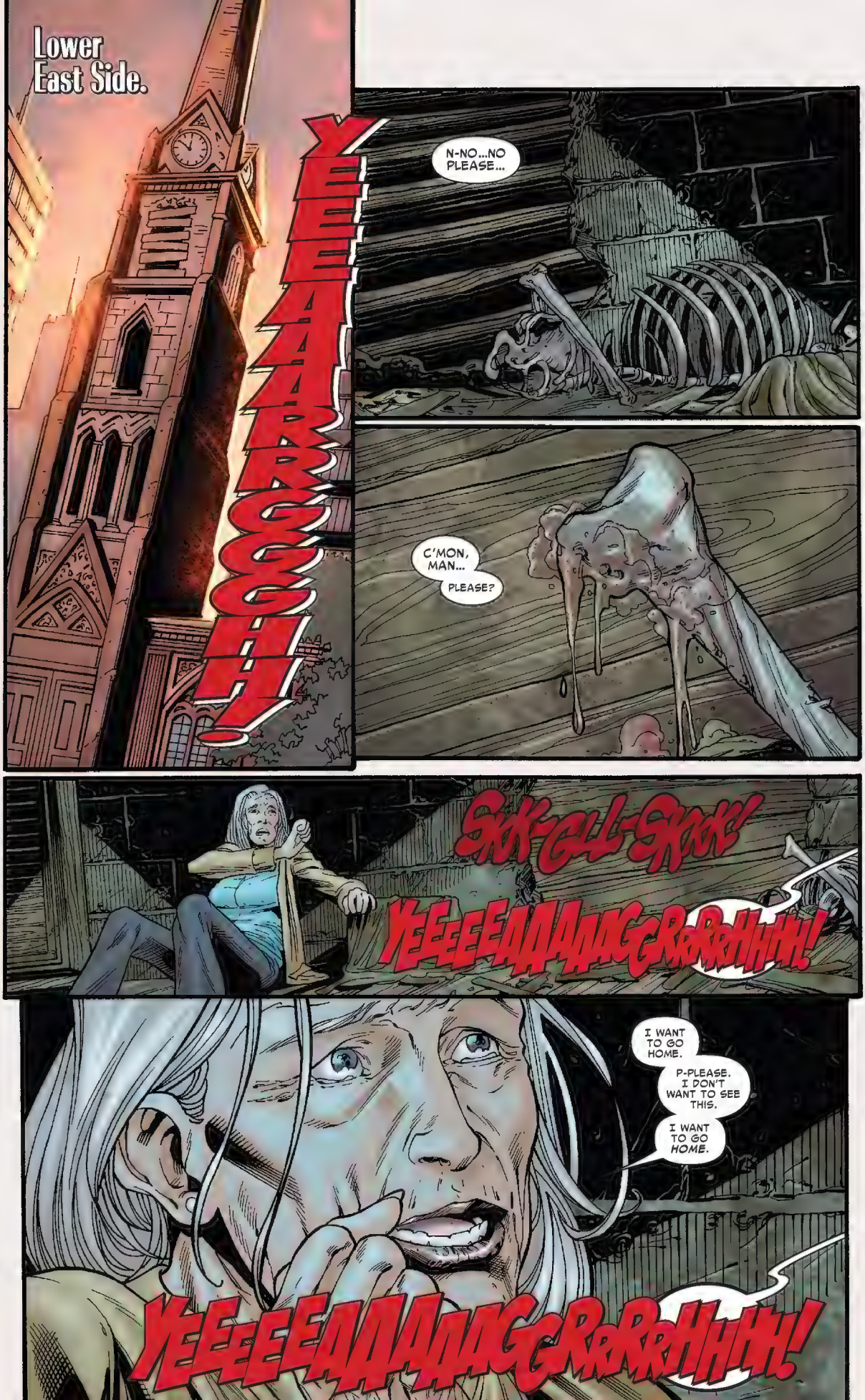

PLEASE... DON'T HURT US.
DON'T WORRY, LADY.
HE WON'T.
DESERVES TO DIE--
PULL ON THE SPINE--
ONE HARD JOLT.
DO IT--
HE WON'T STOP UNTIL SOMEONE IS DEAD.
OH MY--!
GO! GET OUT OF HERE!
SHE CAN'T SEE THIS--
GET OUT!

--SHOULDN'T SEE WHAT COMES NEXT--
KR-KRAK!
NO CHOICE.
NOT PRETTY--
WHAT DID YOU DO?
WAAAAAAA--!
BUT SHE'S ALIVE...

...AND HE ISN'T.
IN HERE! THEY'RE IN HERE!
CRAZY-- KILLING EACH OTHER!
YOU...
I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOUR DEAL IS--
--BUT JUST GO--
JUST GET THE HELL OUT OF HERE--!
MOM...
IF THE FLY HAS HER--
--THEN I'VE GOT A GOOD IDEA WHERE.

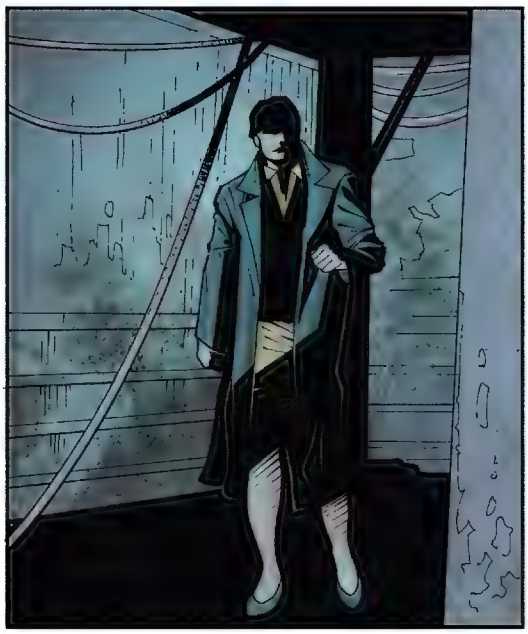
The Abandoned Shipyard.
STATEN ISLAND.
H-HELLO?
HELLO?
ANYONE?
CAN ANYONE TELL ME WHERE THE HELL I AM?
THIS IS HOW I DIE, ISN'T IT?
I'M DEAD ALREADY.
NOT QUITE, MS. BRANT. ALTHOUGH THAT IS MOST CERTAINLY A POSSIBILITY.


YOUR BEHAVIOR IN THE NEXT FEW MINUTES WILL GUIDE THE HAND OF FATE, SO TO SPEAK.
JUST--STOP THE SNIVELING--DO AS YOU'RE TOLD.
W-WHO ARE YOU?
WHAT DO YOU WANT WITH ME?
THE NAME'S CRIME-MASTER.
AS FOR WHAT I WANT... OR MORE SPECIFICALLY WHAT I WANT WITH YOU, BETTY...
...WHY DON'T YOU COME AND ASK ME FACE-TO-FACE.
BZZZZ-
CLIK!
LITTLE MEET 'N' GREET.
YOU'LL BE SURPRISED BY HOW MUCH WE HAVE IN COMMON.
I...I DON'T HAVE ANYTHING TO SAY TO YOU.
SO TOUGH.
BUT I CAN TELL YOU'RE SWEATING THROUGH YOUR POLYESTER.
AND I ASSURE YOU...
...IF I CLOSE THAT DOOR, IT WILL NOT OPEN AGAIN.
EVER.


Lower East Side.
YEEAARRGGGHH!
N-NO...NO PLEASE...
C'MON, MAN...
PLEASE?
SKK-GLL-SKKK!
YEEEEEADAAAAGRRRRRHHHH!
I WANT TO GO HOME.
P-PLEASE. I DON'T WANT TO SEE THIS.
I WANT TO GO HOME.
YEEEEEADAAAAGRRRRRHHHH!

WHERE IS SHE?
THE HUMAN FLY. CREATURE OF HABIT.
ALWAYS BRINGS HIS VICTIMS TO THE SAME PLACE.
GOT HERE BEFORE HE STARTED.
DOESN'T MAKE ME LESS FURIOUS.
GET THE MOM TO SAFETY.
BUT FIRST THINGS FIRST.
LOOK AT WHAT HE'S DONE TO ME!
LOOK AT WHAT YOUR BOY--
YOU SPEAK TO HER AGAIN AND WE'LL SEE HOW WELL YOU FLY WITH ONE WING AND NO EYES.
HEY, WE CAN DEAL, ALL RIGHT?
I'LL TELL YOU EVERYTHING YOU WANT TO KNOW.
YOU WANNA KNOW WHERE CRIME-MASTER'S AT? I'LL TELL YOU.

CLOSE YOUR EYES, MA'AM.
WAIT... WHAT...
I SAID I'LL TALK!
I'LL TALK!
I KNOW.
YEEEEEAAAAAGRRRRRHHHH!
SHK-KK-GGLKK!
WHAT HAVE YOU... DONE?
DIDN'T YOU SAY YOU WANTED TO TALK? SO--
--TALK.



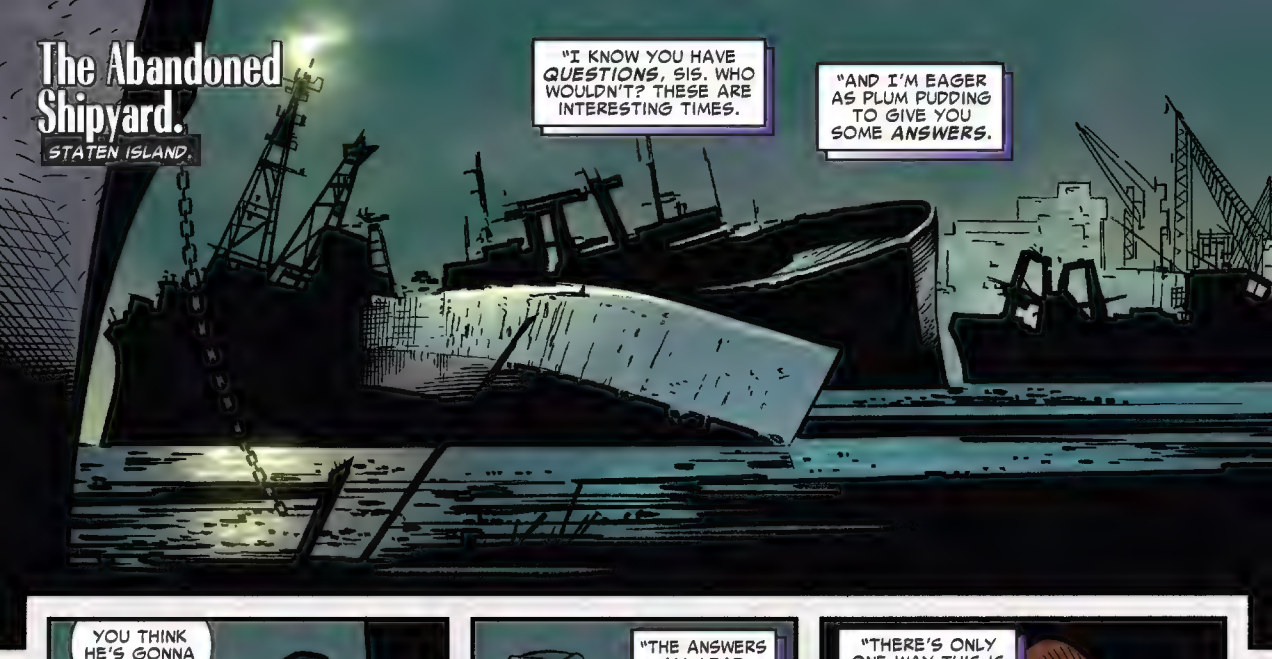
...
MS. BRANT.

THIS WAY, IF YOU WILL.
THE BOSS'LL BE WITH YOU SHORTLY.

OH, GOD.
W-WHAT IS THIS?
THAT'S ME AND MY--
QUITE A LITTLE SHRINE, ISN'T IT?
CRIME-MASTER?
AN ODE TO BENNET AND HIS LITTLE SIS, BETTY BRANT.
TO THE FAMILY.
A FAMILY THAT WAS STRIPPED AWAY FROM ME.
BUT DON'T FEEL TOO BADLY--

--CRIME IS MY FAMILY NOW.
BENNETT?
BUT... YOU...
I'M RIGHT HERE.
AND I'M OFFERING YOU A CHANCE.
A CHANCE FOR US TO BE TOGETHER AGAIN.
AND FOR OUR FIRST FAMILY NIGHT?
WE'RE GONNA NUKE SOME TV DINNERS...
...AND YOU'RE GONNA WATCH ME MURDER THE HELL OUT OF FLASH THOMPSON.

21 "SAVAGE SIX: PART 4 – BEST LAID PLANS..."


The Abandoned Shipyard.
STATEN ISLAND.
"I KNOW YOU HAVE QUESTIONS, SIS. WHO WOULDN'T? THESE ARE INTERESTING TIMES.
"AND I'M EAGER AS PLUM PUDDING TO GIVE YOU SOME ANSWERS.

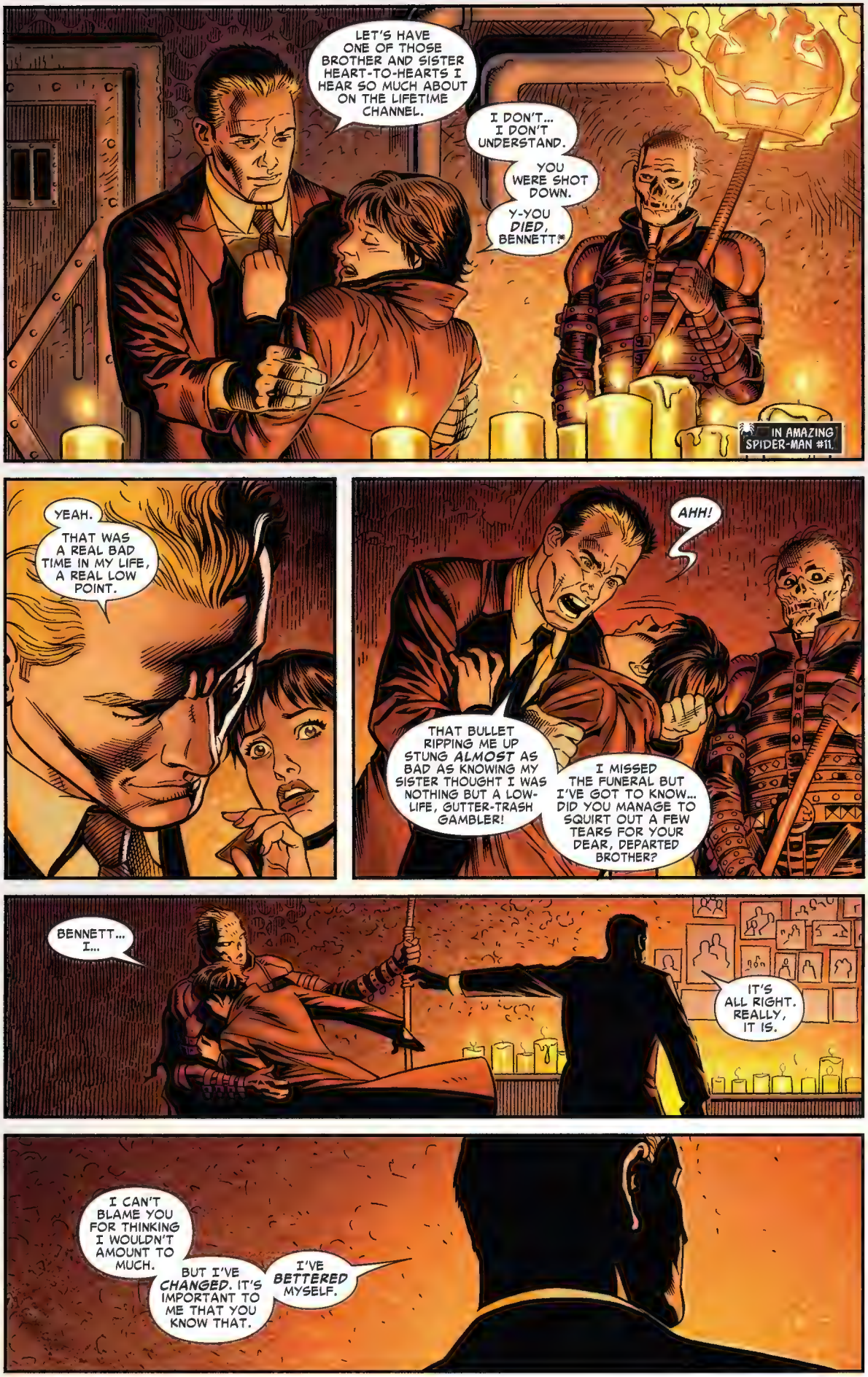
YOU THINK HE'S GONNA SHOW UP?
WHAT AM I, ONE OF THEM MAGIC EIGHT BALLS?
"BUT I NEED YOU TO UNDERSTAND SOMETHING.

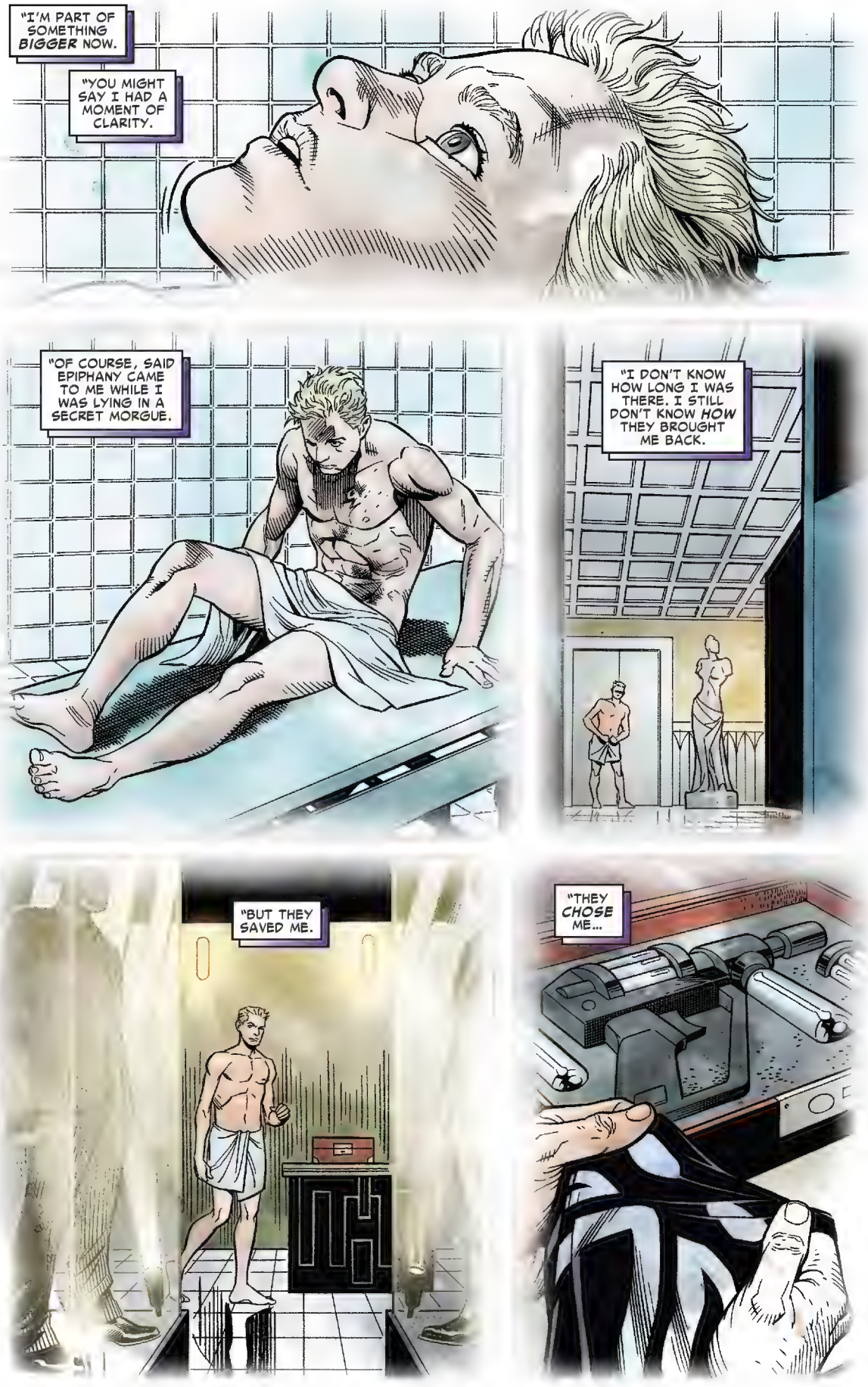
"THE ANSWERS ALL LEAD TO THE SAME PLACE.
UH... HEY...
WHAT'S WITH THE SILENCER? WHAT, YOU FIGURE YOU MIGHT NEED TO DO THIS WORK QUIET LIKE?

"THERE'S ONLY ONE WAY THIS IS ALL GONNA END.
SIGNS POINT TO "YES."
HEY! WA!--
PUM! PUM! PUM! PUM!

"THIS ENDS BLOODY.

"SO...NOW THAT WE'VE GOT THAT OUT OF THE WAY..."


LET'S HAVE ONE OF THOSE BROTHER AND SISTER HEART-TO-HEARTS I HEAR SO MUCH ABOUT ON THE LIFETIME CHANNEL.
I DON'T... I DON'T UNDERSTAND.
YOU WERE SHOT DOWN.
Y-YOU DIED, BENNETT!*
IN AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #11.
YEAH.
THAT WAS A REAL BAD TIME IN MY LIFE, A REAL LOW POINT.
AHH!
THAT BULLET RIPPING ME UP STUNG ALMOST AS BAD AS KNOWING MY SISTER THOUGHT I WAS NOTHING BUT A LOW-LIFE, GUTTER-TRASH GAMBLER!
I MISSED THE FUNERAL BUT I'VE GOT TO KNOW... DID YOU MANAGE TO SQUIRT OUT A FEW TEARS FOR YOUR DEAR, DEPARTED BROTHER?
BENNETT... I...
IT'S ALL RIGHT. REALLY, IT IS.
I CAN'T BLAME YOU FOR THINKING I WOULDN'T AMOUNT TO MUCH.
BUT I'VE CHANGED. IT'S IMPORTANT TO ME THAT YOU KNOW THAT.
I'VE BETTERED MYSELF.


"I'M PART OF SOMETHING BIGGER NOW.
"YOU MIGHT SAY I HAD A MOMENT OF CLARITY.
"OF COURSE, SAID EPIPHANY CAME TO ME WHILE I WAS LYING IN A SECRET MORGUE.
"I DON'T KNOW HOW LONG I WAS THERE. I STILL DON'T KNOW HOW THEY BROUGHT ME BACK.
"BUT THEY SAVED ME.
"THEY CHOSE ME...

"CHOSE ME TO FULFILL A GREAT DESTINY...TO CARRY ON A NOBLE TRADITION.
"A CRIME-MASTER FOR EVERY GENERATION."
AND NOW LOOK AT ME.
LOOK HOW FAR I'VE COME.
I SHOULD HAVE COME TO YOU BEFORE NOW, BETTY. I REALIZE THAT.
BUT I HAD MY TRAINING... AND I HAD MY WORK...
I NEVER STOPPED THINKING OF YOU, THOUGH. I NEVER STOPPED YEARNING FOR THE DAY WE COULD BE REUNITED.
EVEN WHILE WATCHING THAT PATHETIC CRIPPLE FLASH THOMPSON TRY TO TAKE MY PLACE WITH YOU, I--
SIR! HE'S HERE!
SORRY, SIS. WE'LL HAVE TO CATCH UP LATER.
JACKIE BOY, IT'S GAME TIME.

CRIME-MASTER'S IN HERE SOMEWHERE...
WAITING FOR ME...
VREET! VREET! VREET!
BLAM! BLAM! BLAM!
SURRENDER YOURSELF TO THE FURY OF NEW REALITY!
THERE IS NO ESCAPING-- HUMANITY IS COMPLETELY SURROUNDED BY NEW REALITY!
WAITING FOR ME TO FINISH WHAT I STARTED.
THE ONLY THING THAT MATTERS IS FINDING BETTY.
WHAP!

MEGATAK'S DIGITAL MASS MADE PHYSICAL-- HE'S UNSTOPPABLE.
THOOM!
WHHHFFF!
hhh
HITS HARDER THAN THE HULK.
AND HE'S EVERYWHERE.
NEED ROOM. GET CLEAR-- NEED TO--
NNNGHH!
FLESH IS WEAK. FLESH IS AFRAID.
BUT THE CODE IS CLEAN. THE CODE IS MERCIFUL.
THE CODE IS--
NO. NO MERCY.
IT'S NOT YOUR RIGHT TO OFFER HIM SUCH KINDNESS.

HE'S MINE!
HRRRRKKK!
0111000111001010
CHOMP!

TOXIN.
WILLING TO RISK HIS HUMAN HOST TO GET TO ME--TO MY SYMBIOTE.

HIS HOST, EDDIE BROCK--ALMOST AN INNOCENT.
BONDED WITH TOXIN AGAINST HIS WILL--
NNNNF!
--AFTER FAILING TO KILL ME.
STRONGER THAN ME--
THERE'S NO RUNNING, GRANDFATHER.
FED BY THE RAGE.
IS THAT THE STINK OF YOUR FEAR I SMELL? OR IS IT THE HUMAN WHO'S PUT YOU ON A LEASH?
CAN'T WIN THIS.
DEAL WITH HIM LATER.
BETTY IS IN DANGER.
PUT HIM DOWN--OUT OF THE WAY--
IT'S ENOUGH FOR NOW.

SO WEAK RESORTING TO TRICKERY!
WHERE'S THE BEAST THAT TRIED TO SLAUGHTER ME?
GIVE THEM SOMETHING TO KILL.
THAT'S MORE LIKE IT!
COME TO ME! FEED YOUR PROGENY!
GIVE ME YOUR STRENGTH FOR THE SPAWNING!
GRRAAAAA!

WHAT'S THIS? ANOTHER TRICK?

IT'S CALLED A DECOY, ASSHAT.

DISTRACTED HIM FOR A FEW SECONDS.

ALL I NEED.

REEEAAAAAAARRRGGH!

BLAM! BLAM! BLAM! BLAM! BLAM!

BUT BROCK DIDN'T *WANT* TO BECOME TOXIN.

WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM IS MY FAULT.

GRRGGGHHGRG

AND...IF I'M RIGHT...

BROCK AND THE SYMBIOTE HAVEN'T HAD TIME TO COMPLETELY BOND.

STILL A CHANCE TO SAVE THE MAN BEFORE I KILL THE MONSTER.

C'MON... C'MON...

SCLLUHHHHKK!

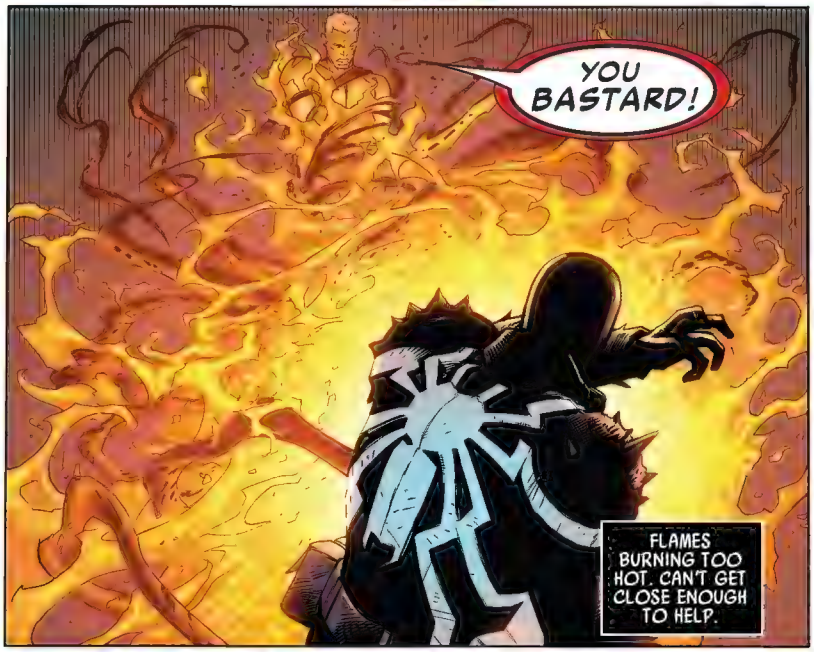
YES! THOMPSON GETS THE TOUCHDOWN.

V-VENOM?

YOU'RE ALL RIGHT, BROCK.

YOU'RE GONNA BE--

EDDIE!
HH--
HHR--
NOOO!


YOU BASTARD!
FLAMES BURNING TOO HOT. CAN'T GET CLOSE ENOUGH TO HELP.

WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO ME?!

YEEEAAAGGGGH!
DEAR GOD-- BROCK--
DIDN'T DESERVE THAT.
BUT THE FIRE...TOO STRONG, MY SYMBIOTE WOULD NEVER GET THROUGH

ONLY ONE THING MATTERS NOW--
BETTY.

BENNETT... I'LL DO WHATEVER YOU WANT.
BUT...JUST LEAVE FLASH ALONE...DON'T HURT HIM.
PLEASE... BENNETT...
AH AH AH!
IT'S CRIME-MASTER WHEN THE MASK IS ON.
AND DO YOU REALLY THINK I'M THAT FOOLISH?
DO YOU REALLY THINK YOU CAN CONVINCE ME THAT YOU'RE READY TO BECOME MY DOTING SISTER, THE CRIME-MISTRESS?
YOU'D BETRAY ME AT YOUR FIRST POSSIBLE CHANCE.
WE'VE GOTTA LET THAT STOCKHOLM SYNDROME SETTLE IN A BIT FIRST.
BESIDES... EVEN IF I WANTED TO LET VENOM LIVE...
EVEN IF HE HADN'T HURT YOU SO TERRIBLY...
...EVEN IF HE HADN'T RUINED SO MANY OF MY PLANS...
...WHAT MAKES YOU THINK HE'D EXTEND ME THE SAME COURTESY?
HE--
NO, BETTY. HE'S RIGHT.

HE'S GOING TO DIE.
EUGENE... I GOTTA DROP SOME TRUTH ON YOU--
I'M BORED OF OUR LITTLE RIVA--
LRRRK!
THAT'S GOOD, JACK.
FWUMPF!
THIS IS BETWEEN ME AND YOUR BOSS.
KR-RANG!

URR... URRR...
I'M...I'M SLIPPING HERE...
SOMEBODY HELP ME!
DADDY! HELP--
-ME
EEEE

POISON'S NOT GOING TO DO MUCH AGAINST--
FSSSSSH!
RRRR

WEAK. SYMBIOTE DYING.
HE'S GOT ME. DEAD TO RIGHTS.
BETTY... PLEASE...
IT'S OVER.
NOW... NOW THAT SYMBIOTE OF YOURS ISN'T OFFERING QUITE SO MUCH PROTECTION...
NOW WE'LL TRY POISON.
BLAM!

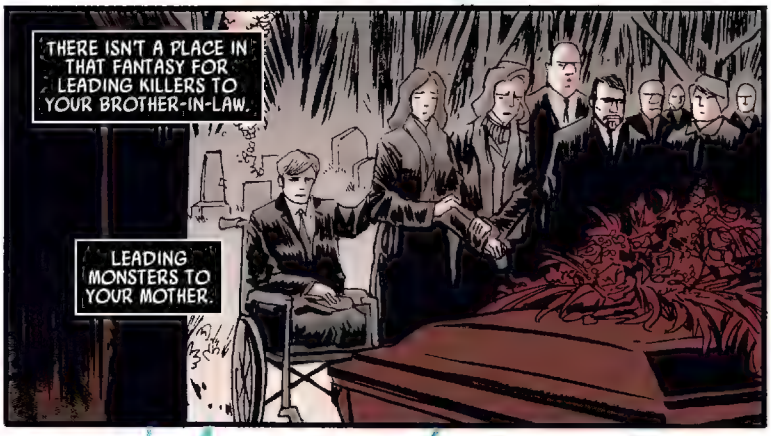
D-DAMN, BETTY.
THAT'S SOME COLD...
I WAS MEANT...FOR... SOMETHING SPECIAL...
Y-YOUR BROTHER?
HE'S DEAD, FLASH.
HE DIED A LONG TIME AGO.

BETTY'S SAFE.
MY MOM AND JESSE ARE SAFE.
THE NIGHTMARE'S OVER.
FOR NOW.
BETTY...
I HAD NO IDEA. IF I HAD--
IT WOULDN'T HAVE CHANGED ANYTHING.
HE WAS COMING FOR ME. LIKELY FOUND OUT ABOUT YOU BECAUSE OF ME. NO MATTER WHAT YOU DID...
BENNETT WOULD STILL BE DEAD.
YOU'D ALREADY MADE UP YOUR MIND. AND ONCE YOU SET YOUR MIND ON SOMETHING...
I LOVE YOU...BUT YOU'RE SELFISH.
I NEVER MEANT FOR THINGS TO TURN OUT THIS WAY.
I KNOW YOU DIDN'T, FLASH.
DESPITE WHAT YOU THINK, THIS ISN'T YOUR FAULT.
AT LEAST... NOT ALL OF IT.
AND FOR WHAT IT'S WORTH, I FORGIVE YOU.
BUT I DON'T EVER WANT TO SEE YOU AGAIN.

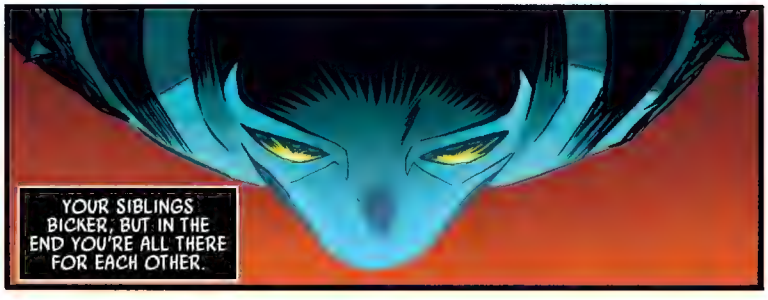
Avengers Lighthouse Station. Later.
AGENT VENOM.
NICE OF YOU TO JOIN US. WE'VE ONLY BEEN CALLING YOU FOR DAYS.
WHERE HAVE YOU--
I'VE HAD A BIG STUMBLE.
IT DIDN'T GO WELL.
TRUTH IS, I'VE BEEN SCREWING UP SINCE I GOT THIS SYMBIOTE.
AND I THINK IT'S TIME I CAME CLEAN.

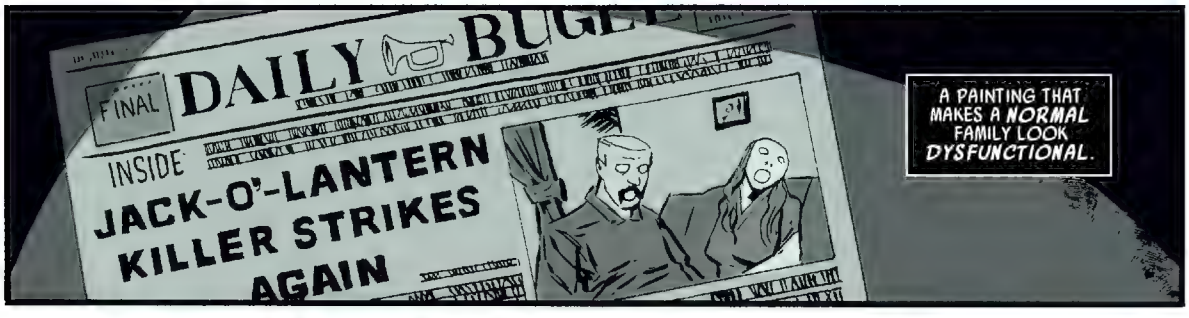
22 "FATHER'S DAY"

THE NORMAL FAMILY.
FUZZY FEELINGS AND SUNNY MEMORIES.
SOME MARKETING GENIUS DECODED OUR CORE IDEAL AND PLAYED IT ON REPEAT FOR THE PAST SIXTY YEARS.


THERE ISN'T A PLACE IN THAT FANTASY FOR LEADING KILLERS TO YOUR BROTHER-IN-LAW.
LEADING MONSTERS TO YOUR MOTHER.

MOM IS MAKING COOKIES IN A SUN-DRENCHED KITCHEN.
DAD COMES HOME FROM WORK IN TIME TO PLAY CATCH AND HEAR ABOUT YOUR DAY.

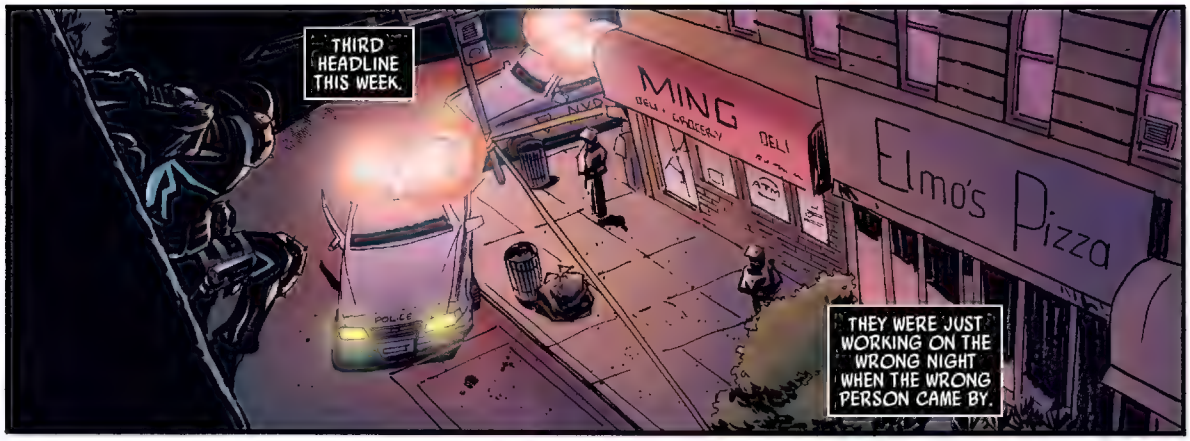

YOUR SIBLINGS BICKER, BUT IN THE END YOU'RE ALL THERE FOR EACH OTHER.

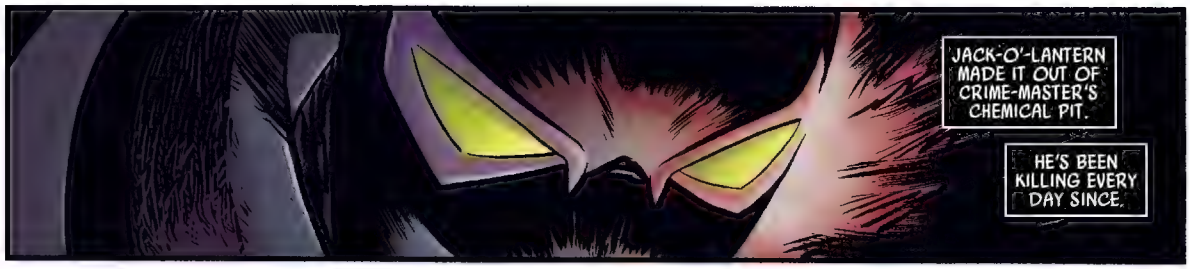

FINAL
DAILY BUGLE
INSIDE
JACK-O'-LANTERN KILLER STRIKES AGAIN
A PAINTING THAT MAKES A NORMAL FAMILY LOOK DYSFUNCTIONAL.

BUT IN THE CASE OF THE TRULY BROKEN--
IT ONLY SERVES TO MAKE THE MEMORIES THAT MUCH WORSE BY CONTRAST.
GROWING UP SURROUNDED BY THAT RAGE, IT WAS NORMAL TO ME.
JUST HOW PEOPLE BEHAVED.
HOW A MAN BEHAVES.

TAUGHT ME JUST HOW HIGH THE ANGER BAR CAN GO.
AND IT GOES.
AND I BIT EVERYONE AROUND ME WITH THOSE TEETH HE GAVE ME.
AND EVEN AS I DID...
I COULD SEE IT.
INSIDE THE PUNCTURE WOUNDS I LEAVE.

I SEE THAT SAME VENOM.
Office TEAPOT
Baby
Monday
STARK TECH
1701
23


THIRD HEADLINE THIS WEEK.
MING
DELI · GROCERY · DELI
Elmo's Pizza
POLICE
THEY WERE JUST WORKING ON THE WRONG NIGHT WHEN THE WRONG PERSON CAME BY.


JACK-O'-LANTERN MADE IT OUT OF CRIME-MASTER'S CHEMICAL PIT.
HE'S BEEN KILLING EVERY DAY SINCE.

LEAVING ME A TRAIL.
MING
Elmo's Pizza

BELOW *TODAY'S* HEADLINE THERE WAS AN ARTICLE ON HOW BEST TO SPEND *FATHER'S DAY.*
TODAY.

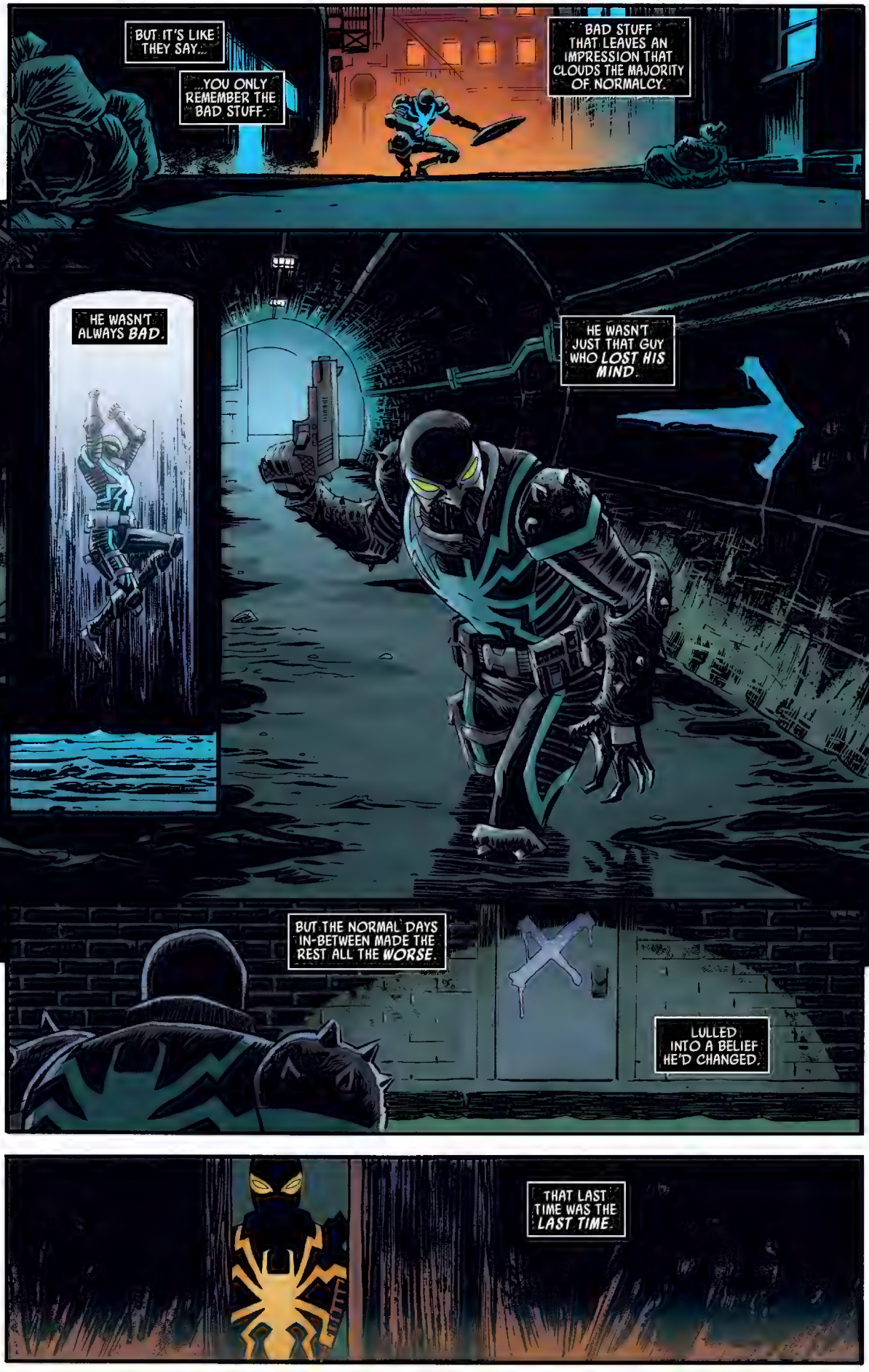
JACK-O'-LANTERN... BRAINWASHED INTO THINKING CRIME-MASTER WAS HIS DAD.
MORE THAN BRAINWASHED, HE GREW UP UNDER THE MAN'S CARE.
ESCALATING THINGS ON FATHER'S DAY--
NO COINCIDENCE.
FIRST ONE SINCE THE OLD MAN DIED.
DIDN'T EVEN CONSIDER WHAT IT WOULD FEEL LIKE.
SO BUSY PROTECTING MY FAMILY FROM THE NIGHTMARE I BROUGHT TO THEM.
JACK O'-LANTERN IS STILL OUT THERE.
NOT FOR LONG.
KILLING DOESN'T BEGIN TO DESCRIBE WHAT I'M GOING TO DO TO HIM.
...THEM'S THE BREAKS, SNAPPY!
OH, YOU DIDN'T JUST GO THERE!
HAHAHAHA

THE HELL'S GOTTEN INTO YOU, SONNY BOY?
I MADE A TRADE WITH DAVID DOWN THE STREET... AND...AND I'D WANTED TO UNMAKE THE TRADE AFTER WE MADE IT...
BUT HE WOULDN'T GIVE ME MY CARDS BACK...AND... AND...
CAN'T LET PEOPLE SCREW WITH YOU LIKE THIS.
YOU TAKE SOMETHING FROM MY BOY?
SO. YOU THINK YOU CAN PUSH MY KID AROUND?
THINK AGAIN.

THE HELL HAPPENED, DAVID?
M-MR. THOMPSON +SOB+ SCREAMED AT ME...TOOK MY FOOTBALL CARDS...
YOU GOT A PROBLEM WITH IT, FOLET?
WANT TO ESCALATE THIS?!
COME ON THEN. I'M RIGHT HERE-- NOTHING ELSE TO DO!
WHAT I THOUGHT.
MY OLD MAN WOULD'VE NEVER DONE SOMETHING LIKE THAT FOR ME.
EVEN NOW, WITH THE DISTANCE I HAVE, WITH THE REALITY OF IT ALL OUT IN THE OPEN--
I STILL DEFEND HIM.

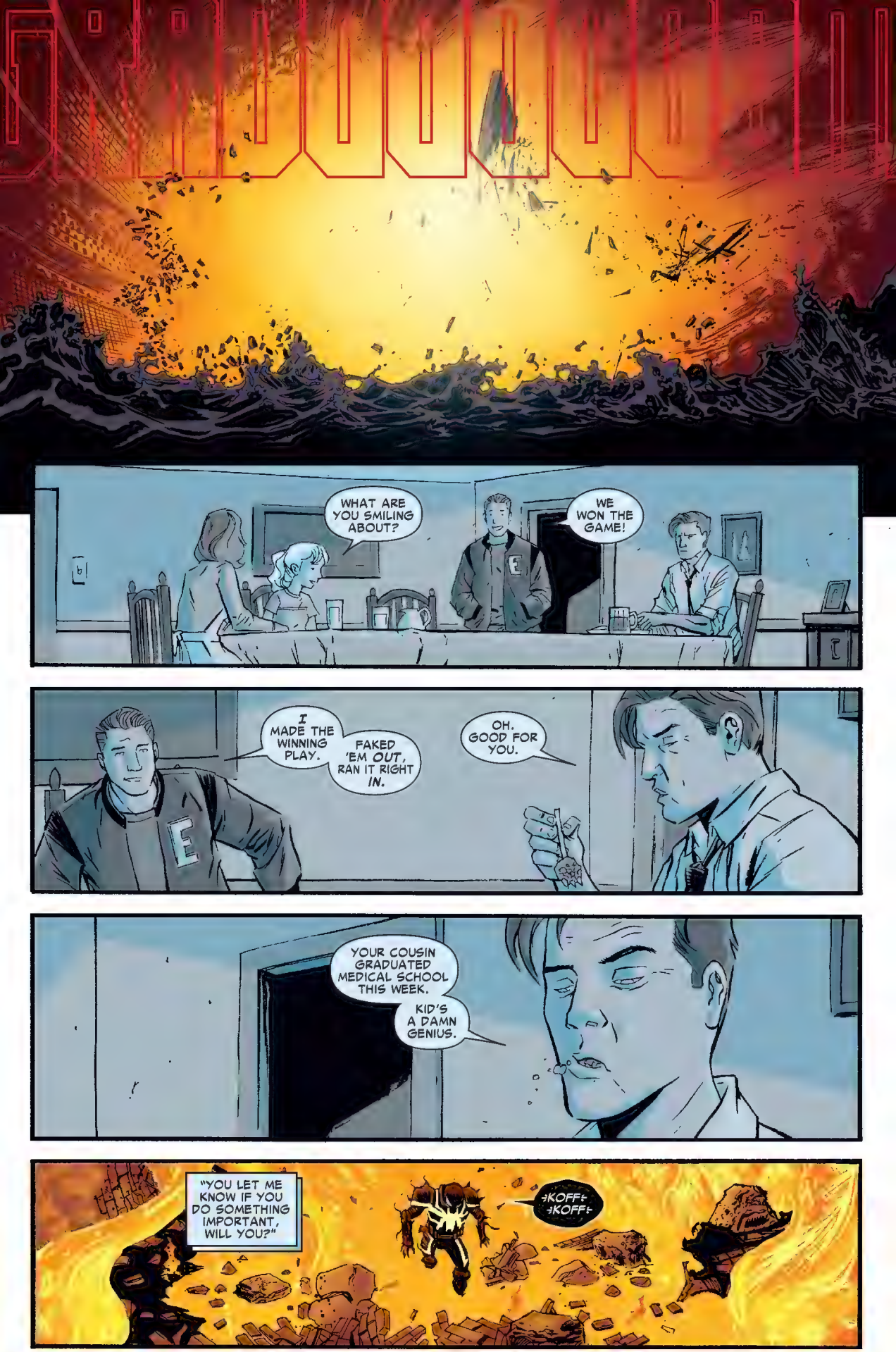
I STILL THINK WELL, MAYBE I DESERVED IT.
MAYBE HE WAS RIGHT ABOUT ME.
MAYBE I'M NO GOOD.
I LET HIM DOWN.
NEVER DID ENOUGH.
NEVER MADE HIM PROUD.
I DESERVED IT.
ALL OF IT.
BUT THE TRUTH IS, HE WAS A SOCIOPATH.
HUMAN INTERACTION WAS JUST A DANCE FOR HIM.
A GAME HE PLAYED TO GET THINGS HE WANTED.
HE DIDN'T LOVE ME BECAUSE HE DIDN'T LOVE ANYONE.
BECAUSE HE WAS BROKEN DOWN THE MIDDLE.

YEAH, WELL, THAT'S WHAT THEY CALL THE THOMPSON HAIL MARY PLAY.
IT'S WHY I'M THE QB, LIZ. AND WHY I'M THE GUY YOU SHOULD GO TO PROM WITH--
KROOM!!
YOU GOT A SPEEDING TICKET AND DIDN'T TELL ME?
KEEP OUT
YOU THOUGHT YOU COULD HIDE IT?
I WAS GOING TEN OVER THE LIMIT--IT ISN'T A BIG DEAL--
YOU KNOW WHAT THIS DOES TO MY INSURANCE RATES?
YOU KNOW HOW MUCH THIS WILL COST ME?!
GET OFF OF ME!
YOU WATCH THAT MOUTH OF YOURS, SONNY BOY, OR YOU'LL BE ON THE STREET!
IF YOU'RE GOING TO KICK ME OUT I'LL GIVE YOU A REAL REASON TO!


BUT IT'S LIKE THEY SAY...
...YOU ONLY REMEMBER THE BAD STUFF.
BAD STUFF THAT LEAVES AN IMPRESSION THAT CLOUDS THE MAJORITY OF NORMALCY.
HE WASN'T ALWAYS BAD.
HE WASN'T JUST THAT GUY WHO LOST HIS MIND.
BUT THE NORMAL DAYS IN-BETWEEN MADE THE REST ALL THE WORSE.
LULLED INTO A BELIEF HE'D CHANGED.
THAT LAST TIME WAS THE LAST TIME.

HE'D NEVER DO IT AGAIN.
HAVE A SEAT, SONNY BOY.
LET'S HAVE A TALK.
KLANGG
SPIDER-MAN
KEEP
WHY DO YOU LET HIM DO THIS?
WELL, NOW, EUGENE-- YOU PROVOKED HIM. YOU KNOW YOUR FATHER'S TEMPER.
HE'S CRAZY. HE'S CRAZY AND HE BEATS YOUR KIDS AND YOU DON'T DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT!

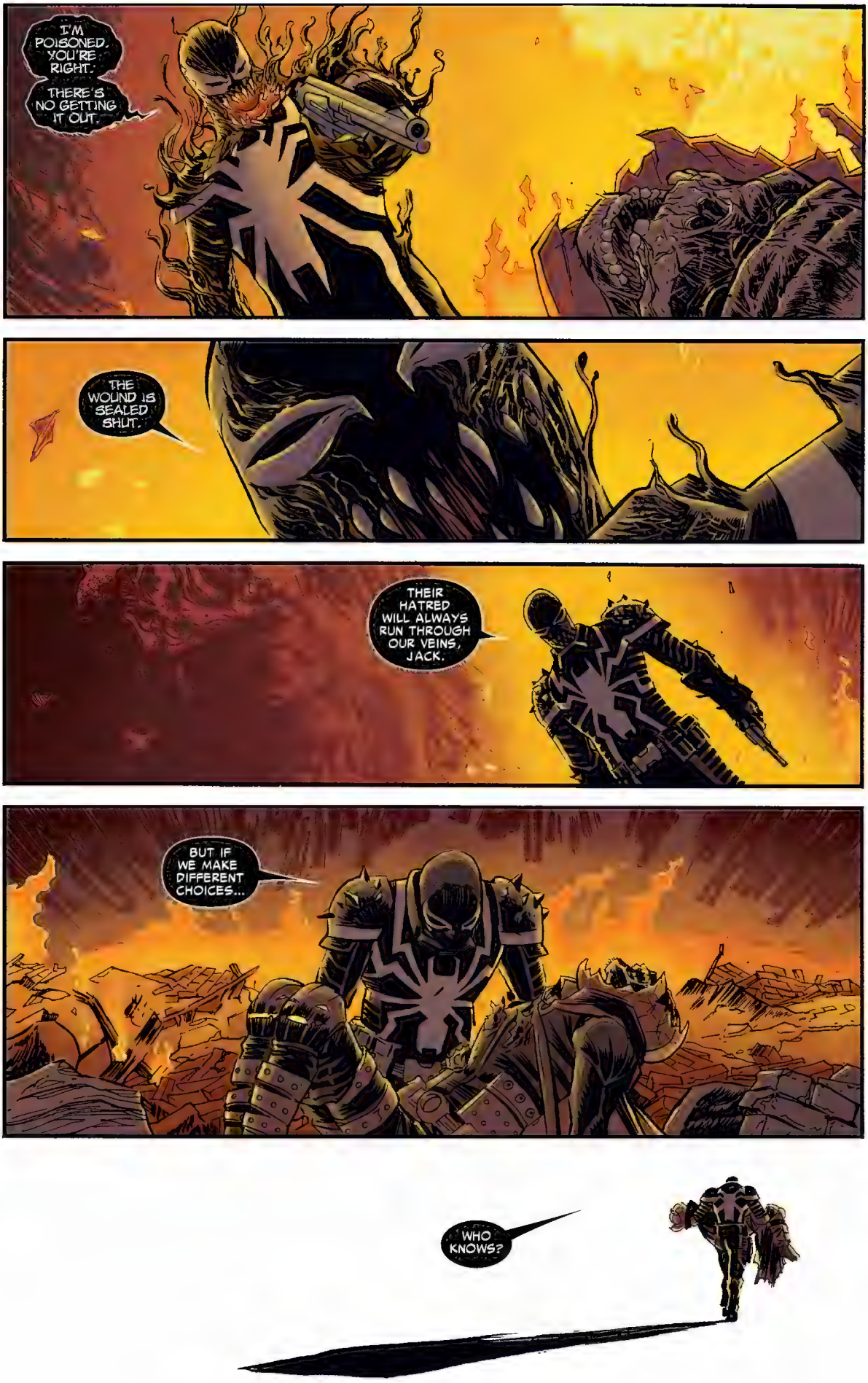
I AM NOT GOING TO SIT HERE AND LISTEN TO YOU BADMOUTH THE MAN I MARRIED. HE HAD A ROUGH CHILDHOOD.
YOU CAN TELL YOURSELF WHATEVER YOU WANT BUT I WAS THERE, EUGENE. IT WAS YOUR FAULT.
YOU JUST CAN'T TALK TO YOUR FATHER THAT WAY.
YOU KNOW, I REALLY NEVER DID LIKE YOU.
IT TOOK ALL MY STRENGTH TO SIT IN A ROOM WITH YOU FOR MORE THAN AN HOUR WITHOUT CRUSHING YOUR SKULL IN.
YOU SON OF A BITCH...
YOU ROTTEN SON OF A BITCH!
KRASH
BUT I'M BACK TO FINISH IT, SONNY BOY.
BACK TO KICK YOUR ASS ONE LAST TIME.
BLEEP
BLEEP
BLEEEEEE--


WHAT ARE YOU SMILING ABOUT?
WE WON THE GAME!
I MADE THE WINNING PLAY.
FAKED 'EM OUT, RAN IT RIGHT IN.
OH, GOOD FOR YOU.
YOUR COUSIN GRADUATED MEDICAL SCHOOL THIS WEEK.
KID'S A DAMN GENIUS.
"YOU LET ME KNOW IF YOU DO SOMETHING IMPORTANT, WILL YOU?"
*KOFF!
*KOFF!

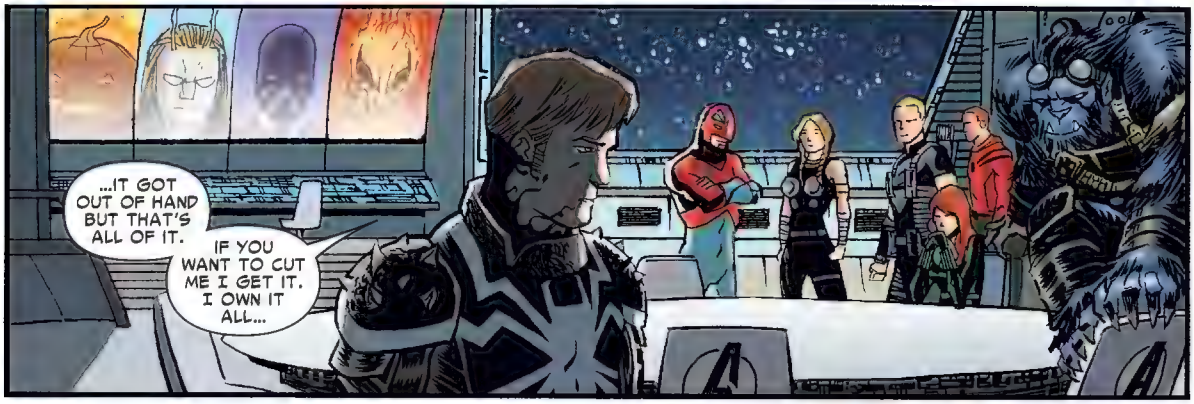
WAS IT NICE GETTING TO SEE YOUR DAD, EUGENE?
I LOST MY DAD RECENTLY.
IT HURTS.
THIS IS GONNA HURT WORSE.
SHNK!
HOW MANY TIMES HAVE I TOLD YOU ABOUT THIS FILTHY ROOM, LITTLE PIGGIE!
PLAKK
STOP!
KRASH

SSHEDD
AT LEAST I KNEW MY DAD *LOVED* ME.
KNEW HE WAS *PROUD* OF ME.
ALL THE THINGS I MADE JESSE TELL ME ABOUT YOUR DAD.
REALLY ROUGH STUFF, EUGENE.
ALMOST MADE ME FEEL *SORRY* ENOUGH FOR YOU TO LEAVE ALL THIS *ARCH-ENEMY* BUSINESS ALONE.
IT'S INTERESTING; YOU MUST FEEL LIKE PEOPLE WILL CUT YOU A *BREAK* GIVEN WHAT YOU'VE BEEN THROUGH.
BUT YOU AN' ME, WE'RE LIKE *BROTHERS*.
I KNOW YOU WOULDN'T WANT ME TO *PITY* YOU.
I KNOW YOU WOULDN'T *WANT SPECIAL TREATMENT* BECAUSE OF WHO YOUR *DAD* WAS.

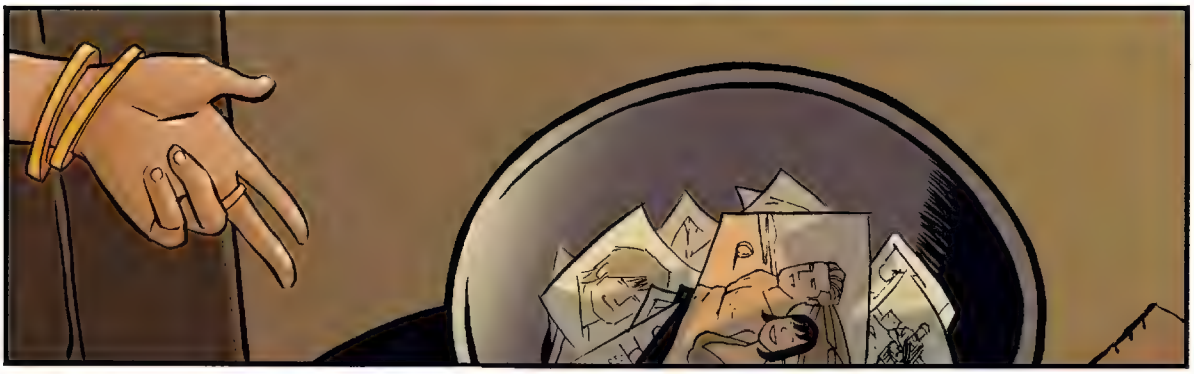
BLAM
BLAH
GHRAGHH!
SKRAK
TROK

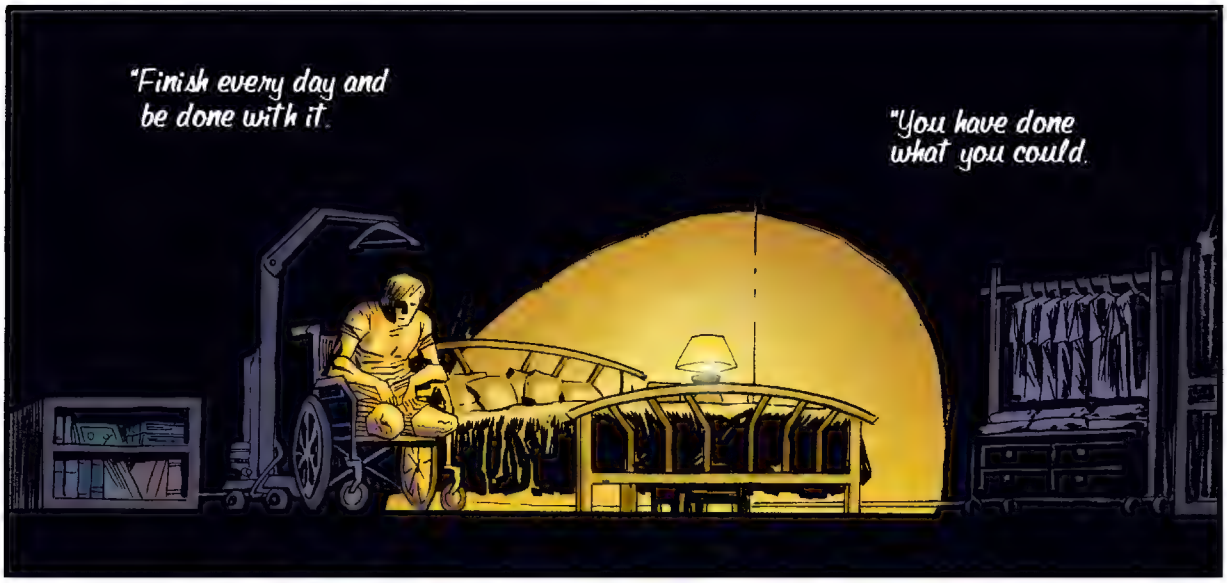

I'M POISONED. YOU'RE RIGHT.
THERE'S NO GETTING IT OUT.
THE WOUND IS SEALED SHUT.
THEIR HATRED WILL ALWAYS RUN THROUGH OUR VEINS, JACK.
BUT IF WE MAKE DIFFERENT CHOICES...
WHO KNOWS?

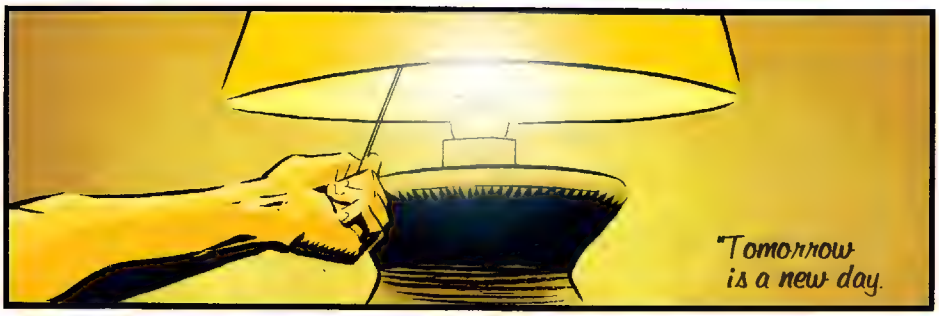
WHAT CELL NUMBER?
BLOCK D WITH THE REST OF THE THIRD-RATE NOBODIES.


...IT GOT OUT OF HAND BUT THAT'S ALL OF IT.
IF YOU WANT TO CUT ME I GET IT. I OWN IT ALL...

"...I KNOW I MISMANAGED EVERYTHING."







"You shall begin it serenely and with too high a spirit to be encumbered with your old nonsense."

– Ralph Waldo Emerson

SymbiWrote

It feels good to put Venom issue 22 to bed. It feels good to have come to an end of my run. Don't get me wrong, I'm sorry I have to leave the book, but it feels good because I got to do most everything that I had intended to. I had so many ideas at the onset I was always awaiting the book's certain and imminent cancellation that would leave the ideas in my morgue file forever.

When we started the book, we were all prepared for it to fly under the radar. We were sure we'd only get 4 or 5 issues out of it. It's a safe way to approach these things – high expectations lead to resentments. For one we were taking two different beloved characters and smashing them together in a new costume. That's always a risky endeavor. Could Flash Thompson carry his own solo title if he had the Venom symbiote?

It feels good to be able to look back and answer yes.

I'll confess that when Stephen Wacker approached me about the project, before I had heard some of the ideas he and Dan Slott had cooked up, I was a bit hesitant. I was a big Spider-Man fan for many years leading up to the creation of Venom, and while those 1st few appearances were very exciting, I didn't love where he eventually grew, and I didn't feel I had any stories I wanted to tell with the character.

But then Stephen went on to tell me that it would be Flash Thompson wearing the symbiote--Flash who had lost his legs heroically in service of his country and who had suffered an abusive, alcoholic father and struggled with addiction himself--I began to imagine this man – an alcoholic, a hero, a bully, a victim of abuse, and now a veteran bonded to an alien symbiote that feeds off of the very same emotions that fuel most alcoholics. I immediately saw a dozen stories in my head. Stories with a ticking time bomb always counting down, waiting for the moment when this hero would lose his temper and fuel the literal beast on his back.

I spent the subsequent few weeks on the phone with Dan Slott, Stephen Wacker and artist Tony Moore, digging into all of the various possibilities for the character. The notebook filled quickly. That's always a sign that you've made the right decision to write a project. Once Tony started turning in his new designs for the character I knew without a doubt we were onto something special, something that had an opportunity to catch on with the fans, something that could last by reinventing these two popular characters in a new and exciting way.

So it feels good to look back and see that we succeeded. I hope in the course of the series that Venom and Jack-O'-Lantern have earned a rivalry that excited you good readers and feels earned. One thing Stephen wanted us to do was to take B and C list villains and build them up into real threats. That's a challenge I'm always up for as I stand by the belief that there is no such thing as a bad character. Many of my favorite characters are considered in the B&C list: the Human Fly, Jack-O'-Lantern, Megatak, and Death Adder were good examples of that. So it was a challenge that I was very excited to accept – and am happy with the results.

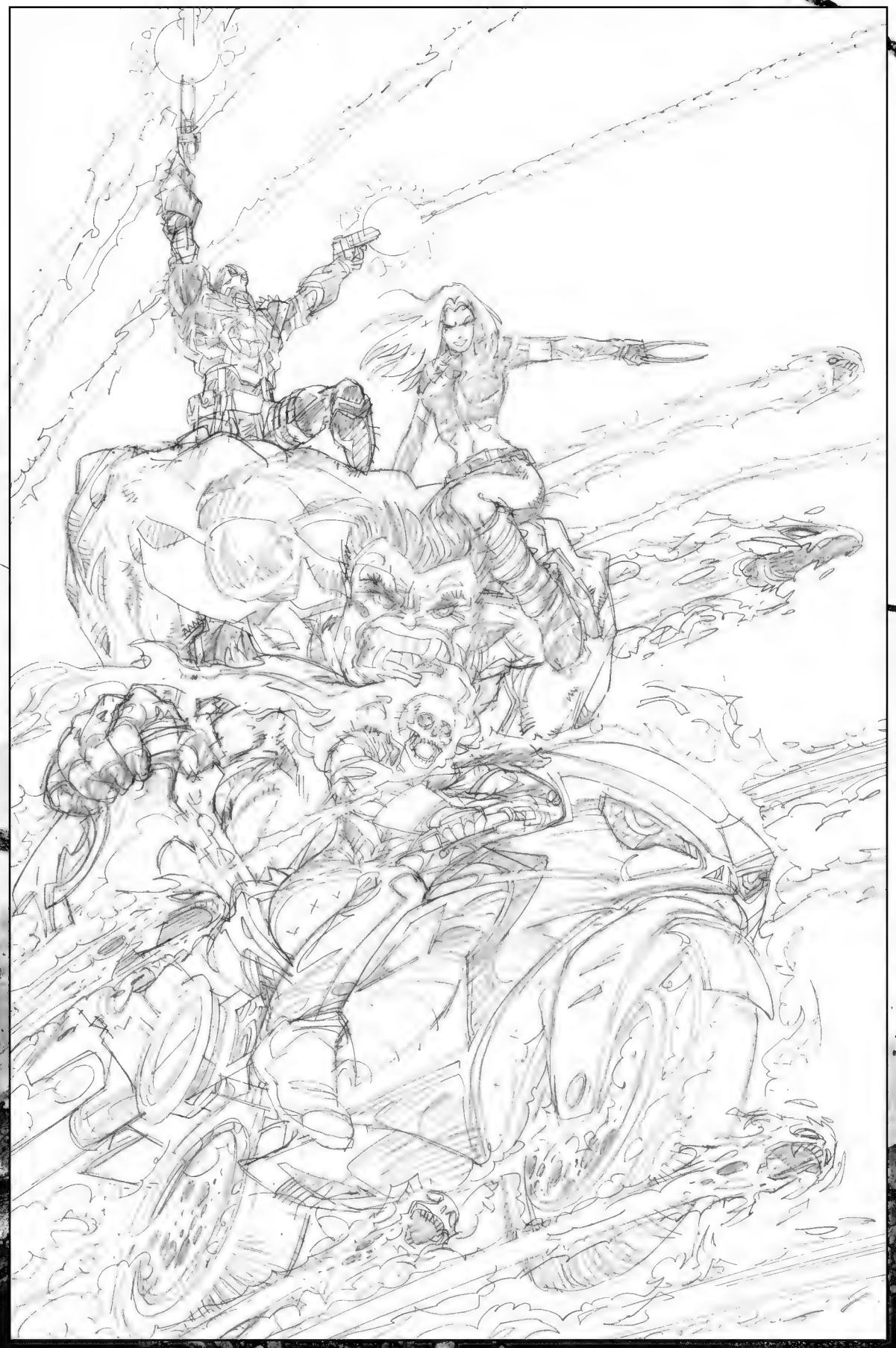
For those of you who've stuck with us and continue with the series, I hope we have made you care for Flash Thompson and his life and adventures. I really have fallen in love with the character and feel so grateful that so many of you have as well.

I want to thank **Tony Moore, Tom Fowler, Stefano Caselli, Lan Medina, Kev Walker, Declan Shalvey, Joe Quesada, John Rauch, Chris Sotomayor, Nelson Decastro, Terry Pallot, Antonio Fabela, Andres Mossa, Marte Gracia, Lee Loughridge, Mike McKone, Morry Hollowell, Michael Del Mundo, Joe Caramagna, Clayton, Cowles, Cory Petit,** and **Chris Eliopoulos** for doing all of the hard work. In my mind the artist defines the majority of what makes a comic book a success. They are the directors, actors, cinematographers, and in the end the final cut editors. The issues of my run that have worked have worked because of their ability to tell story and to convey emotion with pictures.

I also want to thank Stephen Wacker for having faith that Tony Moore and I were the right people to rebuild this new Venom. It was a big responsibility--Wacker's faith in us and hours of brainstorming, made our success possible.

It has been my pleasure to work with Tom Brennan and Cullen over this last arc of the series as well. Having seen them both at work, and knowing what they have brought to this last arc, I know the series is in good hands. To give credit where credit is due: Bunn carried most of the heavy lifting on the Savage Six arc. Were it not for his tireless efforts I don't think my schedule would've enabled me to stick around to see this story to its conclusion. So get ready for Mr. Bunn and Mr. Brennan to grab the reins and ride this black beauty to some crazy new places. I've had my fun beating up poor Flash, hopefully they'll take more mercy on him than I did.

Rick Remender



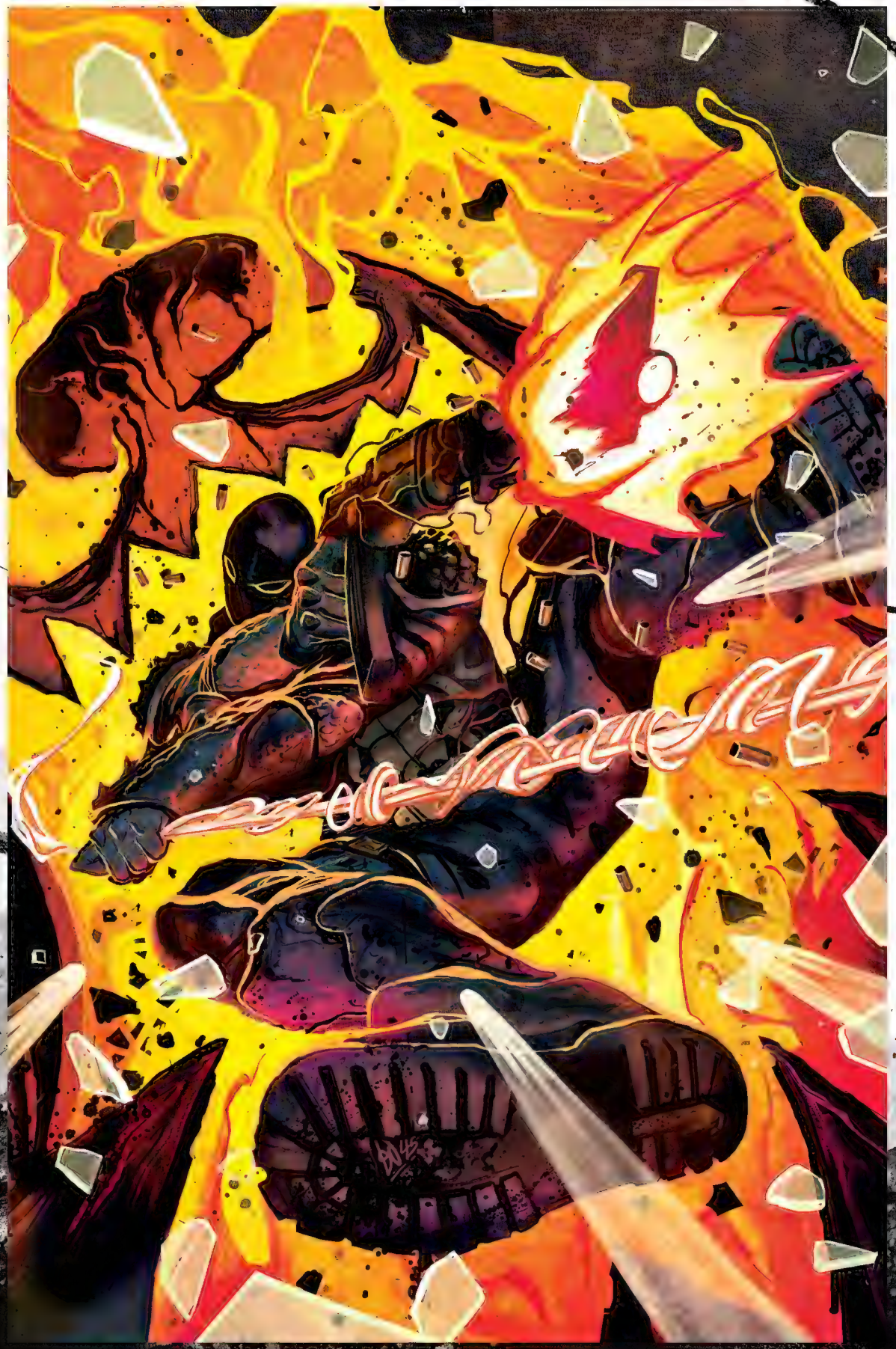
13 **Sketch Variant** by Walter Simonson

13 **Variant over Sketch & Inks** by Walter Simonson

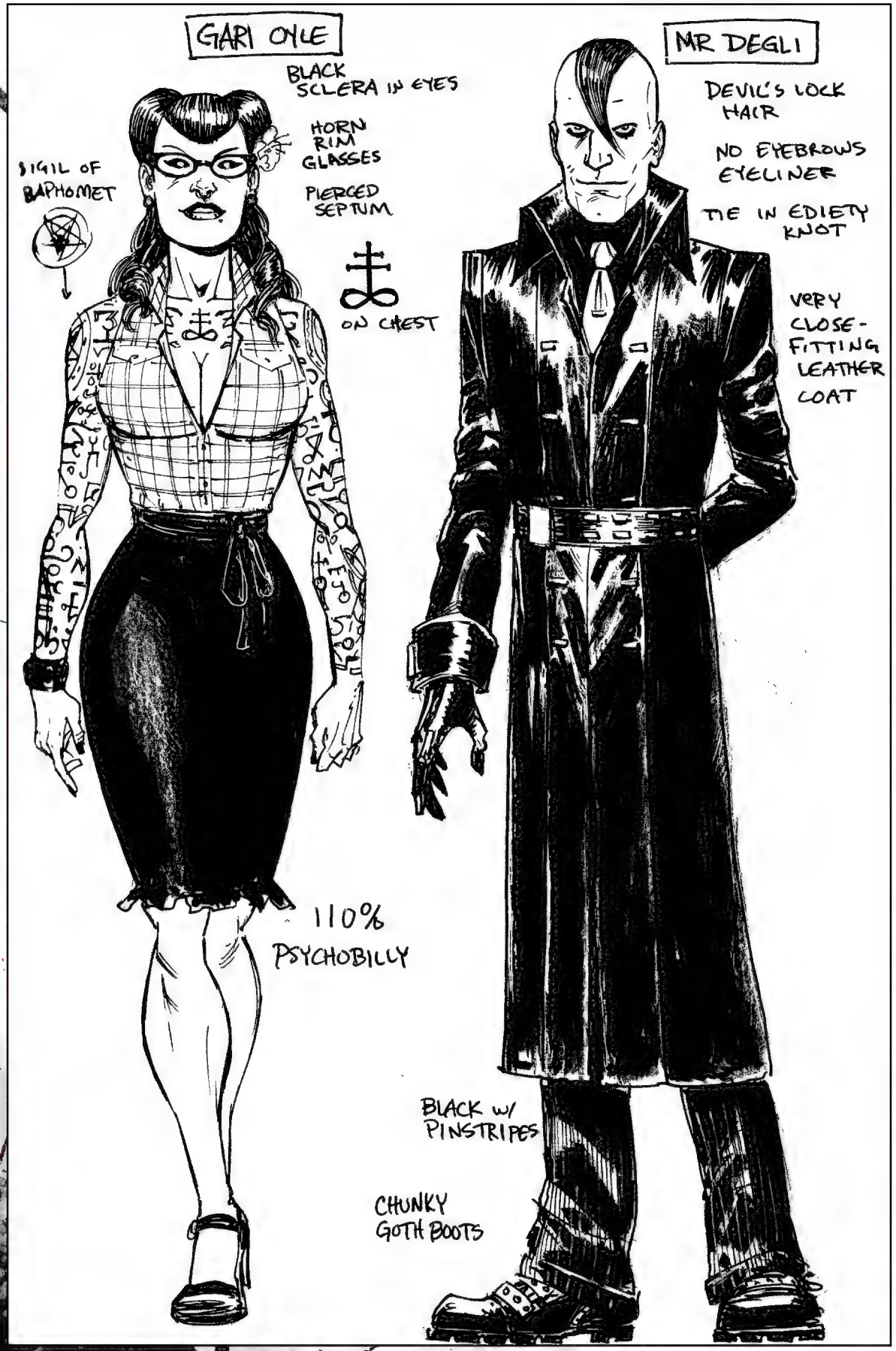
***13.1–13.4* Combined Covers** by Stefano Caselli & Frank Martin

17 **Variant** by Kev Walker

19 **Variant** by Sean Chen, Mike Perkins & Chris Sotomayor



22 Variant by Michael Del Mundo



Character Designes by Tony Moore

Antitheses

FATAL FOUR

Evangelist

TALL, 6.5' MAYBE NEARLY 7'

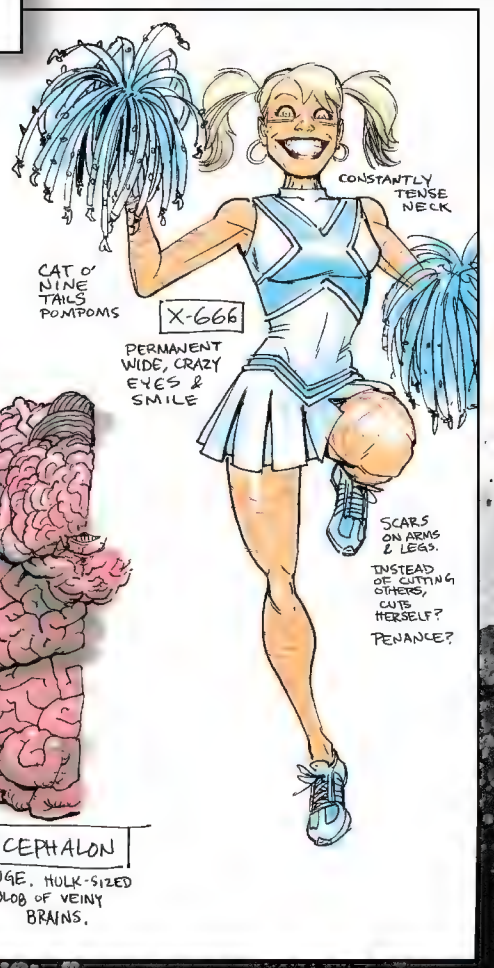
MID-THIGH LENGTH COAT

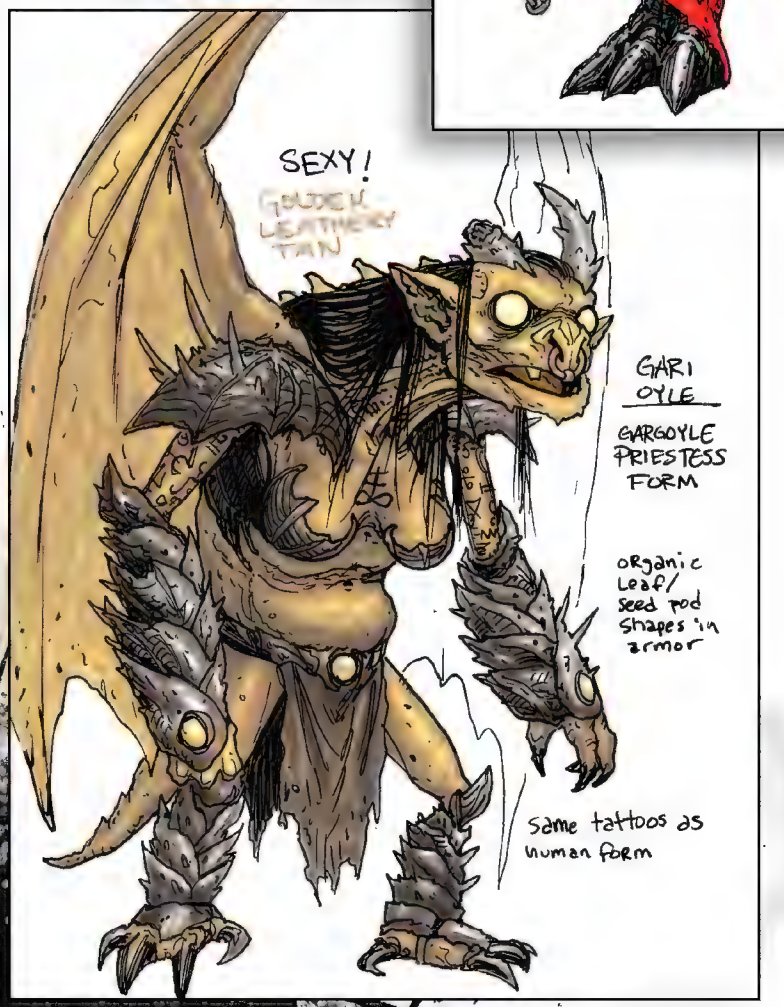
4 EYES ON EACH WING / 4 WINGS

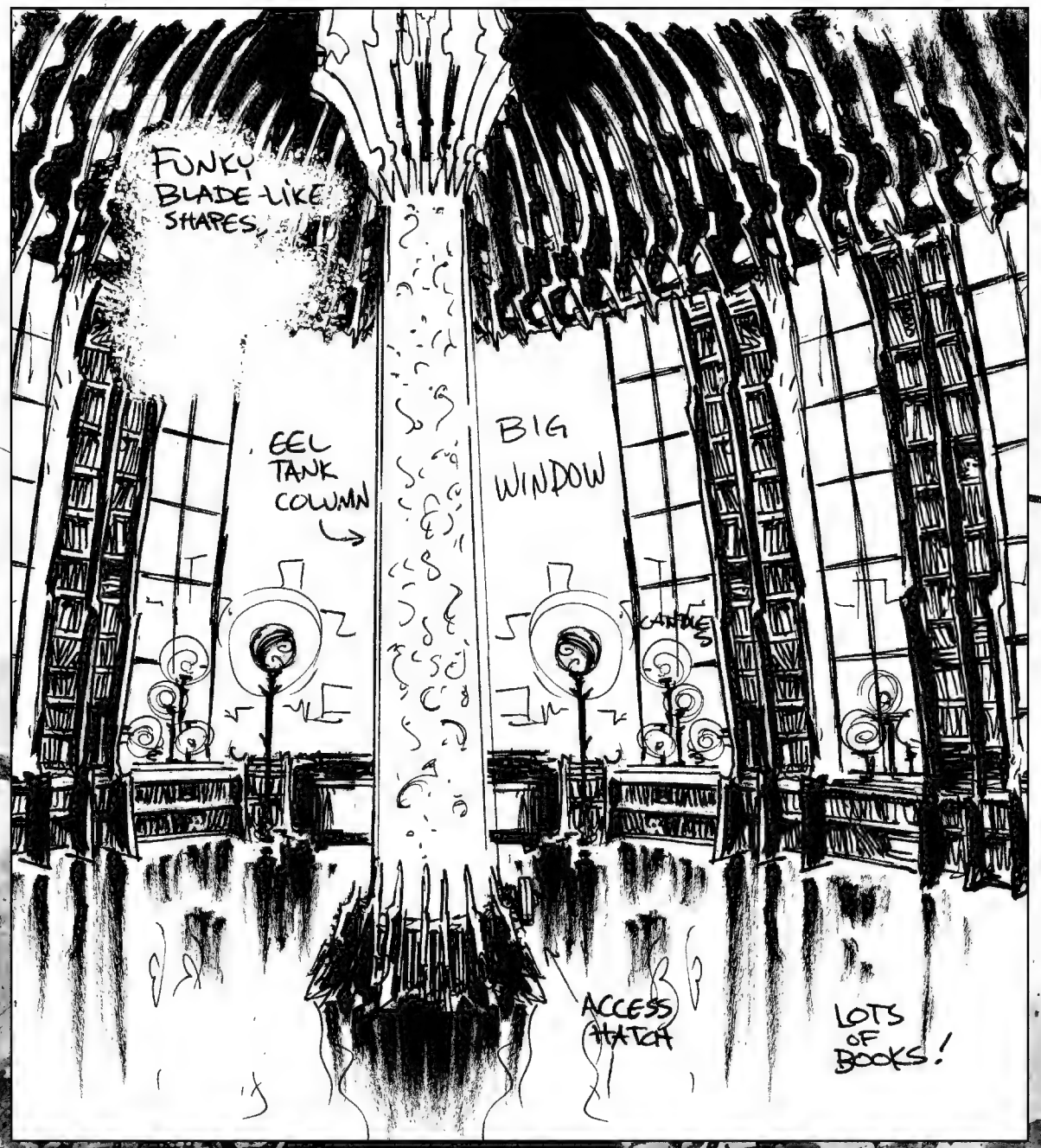
4 EYES

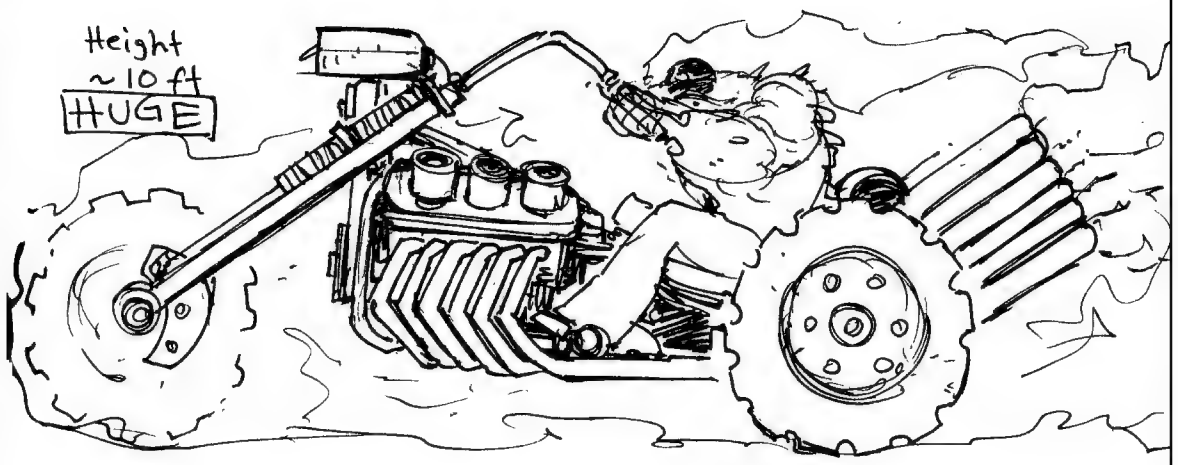
ICHOR

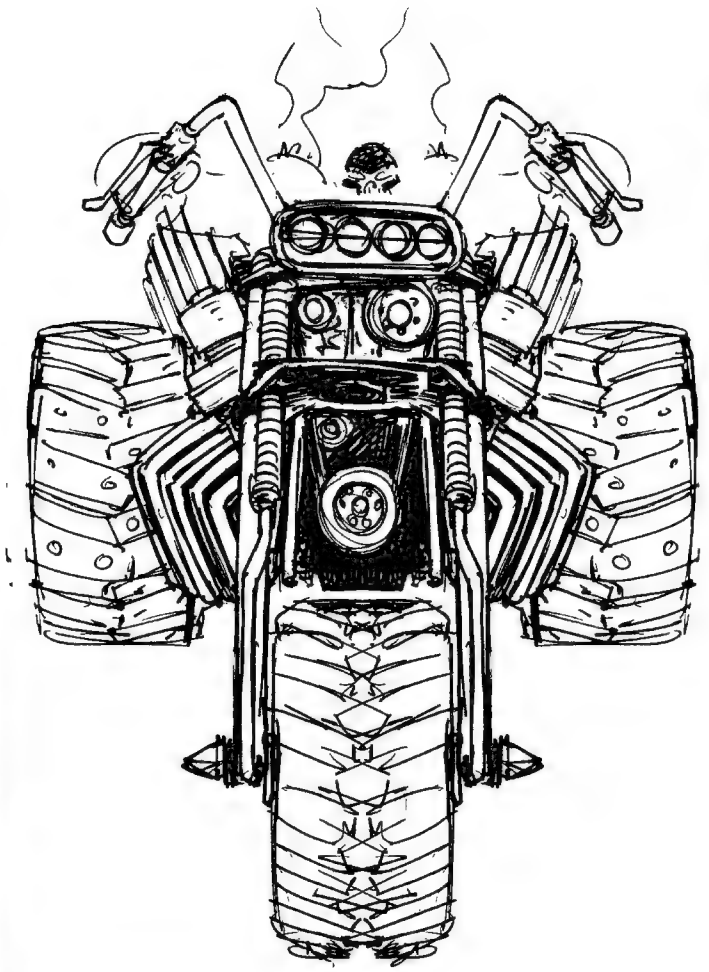
PALADIN WHITE KNIGHT VENOM











HUGE BILLOWING ROLLING INFERNO,

GIANT PLUMES OF THICK BLACK SMOKE.

LIKE A DIESEL-POWERED COMET.

MR. DEGLI'S OFFICE DESIGN by Tony Moore

VENOM #13.1-14, CIRCLE OF FOUR OUTLINE

by Rick Remender, Rob Williams & Jeff Parker

VENOM 13.1-13.2
OPEN — Casino — Team fights antithesis characters.

Blackheart orders them all killed. He wants the Spirits of Vengeance for his own. He tries to convince Ghost Rider to serve him; in his new world there will be endless Vengeance to dole out. Alejandra considers it! But she snaps to and rejoins the fight.

Blackheart sends Gari Oyle to get the amulet that is stopping Hell from spreading.

Fight spills onto the street. Team does not work together, they are being devastated.

Fight reveals things about each character. Flash is insecure and needs a crutch, he's addicted to the suit, and it is a protective barrier against the world. X-23 is worried she has no soul. Hulk is consumed by rage at all times, Alejandra is worried she is corrupted, and as it turns out, her worst fear is true.

X-23 abandons team, works better alone.

Centrifuge — Blaze running the centrifuge, being torn up.

CITY – Rest of the team fights monsters.

EDGE OF TOWN — Son of Satan and Dr. Strange are outside of Hell, looking in, they can't get in, and they can see the amulet Blaze set to stop the spread. Gari Oyle removes the amulet and Hell begins to spread again. All is lost!

Tower — Gari returns amulet to Blackheart, X-23 sneaking around hears this. She tries to get amulet, fails, she is attacked by her antithesis.

X-23 is dying. Terribly wounded by antithesis. Gets to the others, warns them, they must get the amulet from Gari and BH.

Team fight up towards Blackheart. Hulk and X-23 die on the way to get them up higher. Some antitheses are killed or done away with. Venom dies to get Ghost Rider to the amulet. Ghost Rider gets amulet but Blackheart incinerates her midsection. She's going to die soon.

EDGE OF TOWN — GR rockets to edge of town, gives amulet to Son of Satan who uses it with his staff to hold back Hell. GR dies in front of them, Doctor Strange: ALL IS LOST.

VENOM 13.3
Characters wake up in Hell.

Each one goes through personal Hell.

Mephisto pulls them together and tells them he'll send them back to save Earth, but they must sign a mysterious contract. It's this or they stay in Hell and let Earth be lost. They agree and sign.

VENOM 13.4
Return to exact moment Ghost Rider dies. Spirit of Vengeance leaves Alejandra and goes to return to real host, Johnny Blaze. Gari Oyle captures the Spirit of Vengeance before it gets to Blaze. She returns with it to Blackheart.

Team returns to Vegas and DEFEAT remaining antithesis by working together.

They form plan, Hulk and Venom will go with Alejandra to get Spirit of Vengeance from Blackheart. X-23 will go to centrifuge, and tell Blaze to spin other direction to suck Hell back into Hell, before the centrifuge can suck all of Earth into Hell, X-23 will use the explosives we saw her planting in issue 1 to blow up the centrifuge.

Hulk, Venom and Alejandra attack Blackheart. Flash remembers the words Mephisto said about them not being here on accident. They have the power TOGETHER to defeat Blackheart. Flash offers up his symbiote to the Hulk to super power him to get past Blackheart to get the Spirit of Vengeance.

Blackheart knows they have plans at the centrifuge, he sends Gari Oyle to kill X-23 and to offer more souls to the centrifuge, opening it up wide enough to open hell up and make it impossible to stop the spread. Opening it wide enough so the Son of Satan can't hold it back.

They get past Blackheart and get to the SoV. Alejandra doesn't agree to allow Hulk to have SoV. She is no team player. She could cost them the win by her thirst for the SoV. The SoV is hers! Hulk swats her aside and absorbs the SoV! Hulk wearing Venom and now charged with SoV!

VENOM 14
Hulk wearing Venom and now charged with SoV fights Blackheart!

Flash tells Alejandra to come help him, they have to go save X-23 and Blaze from Gari. They have to stop her plans or Hell will spread. Alejandra refuses, eyes only on getting the SoV back. Flash puts a gun to her head, forces her to drive him to the centrifuge.

Centrifuge — X-23 fights Gari. She is getting torn up.

VEGAS — Hulk fights Blackheart, leveling the city.

Centrifuge — X-23 plants C4 on Gari, but is defeated before detonating it. Flash and Alejandra show and are taken down when Alejandra abandons Flash.

VEGAS — Hulk is getting killed by Blackheart.

Centrifuge — Gari is about to feed more souls to centrifuge and open the door to hell wider. Flash makes a "Hail Mary" shot w/last bullet and hits the C4, blowing Gari up.

VEGAS — Hulk is being killed by Blackheart.

Flash tells Blaze to go the other way and suck hell back into hell. He does, Hell is sucked into the portal! When hell is sucked in, they use last of C4 to blow it up.

VEGAS — Hell disappears and takes away Blackheart's powers. Hulk defeats him, Blackheart (disappears? Runs into casino? Is captured?).

Alejandra shows up and attacks Hulk, wants the SoV back. Rest of cast arrive, Blaze tells Hulk not to give Alejandra SoV, she is unworthy. Alejandra is rightful host, takes SoV, knocks aside heroes and flees.

Son of Satan, Dr. Strange and Cap enter Vegas. Hulk tells Cap Venom saved the day, real hero, gave up the symbiote to help. Cap changes mind about Venom.

Son of Satan is troubled, he doesn't say why. We see from his POV he can see a pentagram on each of our heroes.

Son of Satan: "a problem for another day."

END

VENOM #14 SCRIPT

by Rick Remender with inked artwork by Tony Moore

PAGE 1

1 - Following a ROAMING GANG OF DEMONS, civilians scatter and flee, a few demons have landed victims and they consume their flesh. Our FOCUS DEMON has eyes on a BURLESQUE DANCER who is fleeing.

2 - DEMON FOLLOWS BURLESQUE DANCER, closing in on her. Terror all around.

3 - BURLESQUE DANCER ROUNDS CORNER, we can't see what's on the other side.

4 - FRONT ON DEMON ROUNDING CORNER, TERRIFIED expression at what he sees.

PAGE 2

1 - FLASH THOMPSON BLOWS THE DEMONS HEAD APART WITH A DESERT EAGLE. Flash is on the ground - wedged in between two buildings, propped up on the side of a TOUGH LOOKING 70S MUSCLE CAR, dead driver inside, and surrounded by oncoming demons. He sits with a few rifles and handguns, shooting whichever demon enters his little area. Black crows with wolf's heads all over.

FLASH (CAP)
Giving Hulk the symbiote was a bad idea.

FLASH (CAP)
Hindsight being 20/20.

2 - Burlesque dancer runs away, Flash calling to her, watching, helplessly, as five Demon's rush, surround her.

FLASH
Stop! COME BACK!

3 - THE DEMONS BEGIN EATING THE BURLESQUE DANCER, feasting like a zombie horde. Flash blows the head off of a demon, but there are too many to do any good.

4 - DEMONS CLOSE IN ON FLASH, HE SHOOTS A FEW.

FLASH (CAP)
Had to--make sure he had as much power as possible--

FLASH (CAP)
enough to defeat the son of the devil.

FLASH (CAP)
Two clips left... two clips and...

5 - PULL OUT HIGH AND WIDE - SHOW A BIG CROWD OF DEMONS GATHERING all around the little alleyway Flash is CORNERED in. He's in real trouble.

FLASH (CAP)
Giving Hulk the symbiote was a bad idea.

PAGE 3

1 - VENOM/HULK RIDER ROCKETS INTO BLACKHEART'S CHAMBER, BH stands fearless. Venom/Hulk Rider (going with VHGR from here on out) is holding Alejandra over his shoulder.

VHGR
WwE haVvE CcOoMe toO ColLecT VenGeaNnce.

BLACKHEART
You think this will help you?

2 - VHGR guns the bikes engines, shooting flames out behind it, aimed at BH. ALEJANDRA RUNS FOR COVER.

BLACKHEART
Even combined, your abilities pale to my own.

BLACKHEART
We are in Hell--this place and it's hatred fuels me entirely--

3 - VHGR SHOOTS FLAMING WEBBING ONTO BH'S FACE to shut him up.

SFX
THWIPP

VHGR
SsiLlenCe.

4 - VHGR guns it rocketing towards BH who stands, tearing burning webbing off of his face.

VHGR
OuUr GgiftSs exPpandDedD--

5 - Front on VHGR, ferocious, ready for the impact. His RIGHT FIST IS PULLED BACK, holding the barbed hook/chain, ready to punch, the FIST BURSTING INTO FLAMES AS WELL.

VHGR
AbilitTy to sSseVer venGeanCe aRe neaRly limiTleSs.

PAGE 4

SPLASH - IMPACT - EXT. TOWER - VHGR HITS BH HARD, BOTH OF THEM EXPLODING OUT OF THE BLACK TOWER. Maybe VHGR is finishing an uppercut here. BH's neck is tearing from the impact, his physical body badly injured, his spine clearly snapping, bone protruding out from under black demon skin, black blood spraying--this is the mother of all punches, the fist itself is flaming with swirling penance energy, it leaves a tracer trail behind it.

VHGR
FeEl ouRr PeNaNce PuNcH!

PAGE 5

1 - CUT TO - WIDE EST. OF CENTRIFUGE - X-23 kneeling on the control overhang, YELLING TO BLAZE WITHIN.

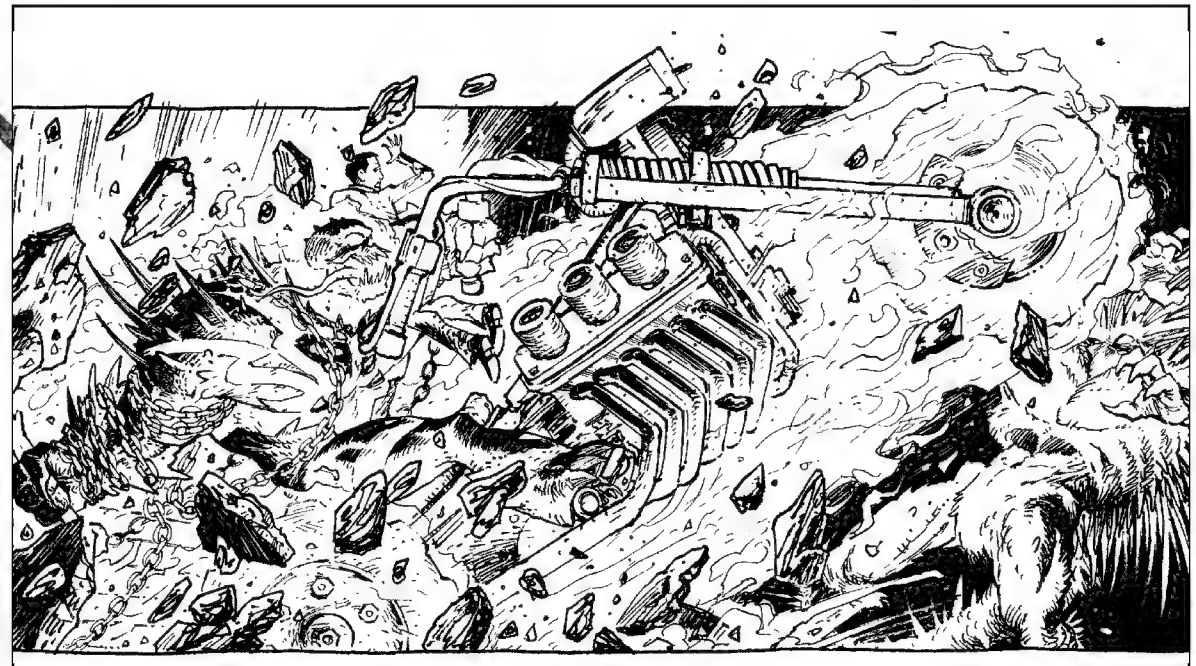
X-23
Listen to me--when I give say so, you turn and ride the other way.

X-23
We're going to suck Hell back down and once it's there, we're going to blow this thing apart.

X-23
Listen to me--when I give say so, you turn and ride the other way.

X-23
We're going to suck Hell back down and once it's there, we're going to blow this thing apart.

BLAZE
Alright--can't--can't k-keep this up--much longer--



BLAZE
--you better be right.

3 - X-23 IS PLANTING C4 ON THE SIDE OF THE CENTRIFUGE.

X-23
It's a dice toss, Johnny Blaze.

GARI OYLE
Most things are--

4 - Gari drops from the sky, tearing X-23's back apart.

X-23
YEERAGH!

5 - X-23 turns and swipes, GARI AVOIDS.

GARI OYLE
Not common knowledge--we gargoyles are versed in magic.

PAGE 6

1 - GARI SPELL CASTS, hits X-23 with a spell that TURNS HER CLAWS INTO COPPER DUST THAT BLOWS AWAY.

GARI OYLE
Alchemy for example.

GARI OYLE
Most metals turn to copper dust very easily.

2 - X-23 is stunned by the loss of her claws. Gari crouches, revealing her own claws.

GARI OYLE
Now, let's see how you like a taste of your medicine.

3 - CUT BACK TO THE CITY - WIDE EST. FLASH SHOOTING DEMONS SURROUNDING HIM.

4 - They're closing in, Flash is about to be killed.

5 - ALEJANDRA SAVES FLASH.

6 - Alejandra tells Flash Gari went to stop X-23, but Gari is the high priestess of the gargoyles, she will win the fight.

They need to get the SoV back from Hulk and into her -- it's the only hope.

PAGE 7

1 - Flash is confused, he tells Alejandra, no, they have to go save X-23 and Blaze from Gari. They have to make sure Hell is pulled back down and the centrifuge is destroyed.

2 - ALEJANDRA BARKS, GETS UP TO LEAVE FLASH, refuses him, eyes only on getting the SoV back.

3 - Flash puts his gun on her, he is cold, smiling, no-nonsense,

FLASH
This gun says you're going to do what I say.

4 - cut to streets - VHGR SWINGING LIKE SPIDER-MAN on a flaming web line, feet first, TOWARDS BLACKHEART. His venom tongue is flicking and crazy.

5 - IMPACT - VHGR KICKS BH A GOOD ONE.

PAGE 8

1 - VHGR ON TOP OF BH, GRABBING HIS NECK, LOOKING HIM IN THE FACE.

2 - Same shot but VHGR releases his penance stare. Terrible light and ghosts and fire and doom.

BLACKHEART
Yes, worth a try--but your Penance stare makes a mind relive all misdeeds at once.

3 - BH BEGINS GROWING, knocks Hulk off of him.

BLACKHEART
But making others suffer is what BH gets his power from, he is charged up by it. Grows large with power.

4 - BH GROWS TO THE SIZE OF GODZILLA as Hulk watches, bummed out.

PAGE 9

1 - cut to - CENTRIFUGE - Gari is cutting X-23 up.

2 - Gari is cutting X-23 up. Worse and worse.

3 - X-23 manages to flip over and behind Gari.

4 - On X-23 MID-AIR as she PULLS C4 OUT OF HER BACKPACK.

5 - still upside down and midair, X-23 DELICATELY PLACES THE C4 ON THE BACK OF GARI.

6 - X-23 lands as she produces the HANDHELD DETONATION DEVICE.

PAGE 10

1 - Gari swipes across X-23's back, KNOCKING THE HANDHELD DETONATION DEVICE OUT OF HER HANDS and far away.

2 - X-23 on her stomach, looking up at the device, out of reach, in the extreme foreground.

3 - Gari pulls her lips back and her mouth opens wide, her teeth grow like the swirling gears of a garbage disposal. She's about to bite down into X-23 and take her head off.

4 - GARI BITES DOWN AND TEARS X-23'S THROAT OUT!

5 - SEEMINGLY TOO LATE - FLASH AND ALEJANDRA EXPLODE THROUGH THE WOOD FENCE, in the MUSCLE CAR Flash was leaning on at the opening, show FLASH SHOOTING OUT THE WINDOW, like a real pro too, HITTING GARI with three perfect shots.

SFX
BLAM BLAM BLAM

6 - INT. CAR - ALEJANDRA DRIVING. Flash out the window shooting.

ALEJANDRA
You're a fair shot.

FLASH
Thanks.

SFX
BLAM BLAM BLAM

PAGE 11

1 - EXT. CAR - ALEJANDRA PUSHES FLASH OUT OF THE CAR.

ALEJANDRA
And your gun is no longer on me.

FLASH
NO--

2 - Flash rolls out of the car.

3 - HARD IMPACT WITH EQUIPMENT.

SFX
TWUNGG

4 - FLASH, FOREGROUND, is bloody and beaten and awful looking as he tries to lift himself off the ground, blood streaming from his face, GARI IS READY FOR PAYBACK, she LURCHES HER WAY TOWARDS HIM. X-23 is out cold from blood loss. We see ALEJANDRA SPEEDING AWAY from the scene in the muscle car.

GARI OYLE
Wow. You look... you look screwed. Not only do you have jerks for friends--

5 - GARI STABS A CLAW THROUGH FLASH'S SHOULDER, IT GOES DEEP. HURTS.

GARI OYLE
You have, like, zero legs and can't move without that alien parasite. [all temp placeholder]

SFX
SHNK

FLASH
GHRAGHH!

PAGE 12

1 - CUT TO - VEGAS - HULK ROCKETING ACROSS A RIVER OF BLOOD being chased by giant Blackheart.

SFX
TOOOM TOOOM TOOOM

2 - GROUND LEVEL - SHOT FROM AROUND A CORNER - HULK takes a SHARP TURN now ROCKETING TOWARDS us as BH runs past in the BG.

3 - HULK ROCKETS ACROSS THE RIVER OF BLOOD, a trail of flames behind him, damned 1920's Jitterbug zombies burn in torment.

4 - SUDDENLY BH'S FIST SMASHES DOWN, GRABBING HULK.

5 - IMPACT - BH THROWS HULK INTO A BUILDING; HE DISAPPEARS INSIDE AS THE BUILDING COLLAPSES.

SFX
KRAWTOOOOOM

PAGE 13

1 - CUT TO - CENTRIFUGE - GARI STANDS OVER BADLY BEATEN FLASH. Like crazy badly beaten. Near dead. Should be dead.

GARI OYLE
You know--HA--that idiot Johnny Blaze, he's spinning for no good reason.

GARI OYLE
Portal won't suck down Hell unless he turns around and spins the other way. [temp exposition]

GARI OYLE
But...

2 - GARI WALKS AWAY FROM FLASH TOWARDS THE CENTRIFUGE, suddenly concerned.

GARI OYLE
... if he does that, we all go down there.

GARI OYLE
You know what--I should kill him first.

GARI OYLE
Before he figures that out.

3 - X-23 MOTIONING FOR FLASH. Flash is reaching for his GUN.

4 - FLASH LOOKS UP, X-23 POINTS TO GARI. X-23's throat's been torn out so she can't speak.

5 - Flash can see the C4 that X-23 put on the back of Gari.

6 - FLASH, beaten, bloody, near dead, LIFTS HIS HANDGUN.

FLASH
Hail Mary.

PAGE 14

1 - DETONATION - FLASH SHOOTS THE C4 ON GARI AND SHE BLOWS WA-AY UP.

SFX
GLAOOOOM

2 - FLASH SMILES WARMLY AT X-23. Burning pieces of Gari rain down.

X-23
Nice teamwork.

3 - CUT TO - STREETS OF VEGAS - BLACKHEART STOMPING THROUGH VEGAS LOOKING FOR HULK.

BLACKHEART
Hell has spread--taken over the west coast, I can feel their suffering.

BLACKHEART
I am ustoppable!

HULK
WwE AaM HaVe AN IiDea--

4 - BLACKHEART TURNS to see HULK, in the PENTHOUSE OF HIS BLACK TOWER, pointing THE MIRROR at BH, who can see his face in it.

HULK
Only way to defeat the son of the devil--

5 - NARROW PAGE WIDE HORIZONTAL - CLOSE ON HULK OF VENGEANCE, SMILING from one side of his flaming skull to the other.

HULK
--his antithesis.

PAGE 15

1 - Hulk says the magic words (he heard in iss 13) and the MIRROR GLOWS WHITE, blinding BH.

2 - Hulk holds the mirror as a featureless being made of pure white light floats towards BH who recoils in dread. Vegas is returning to normal all around them.

BLACKHEART
Begging for his life.

3 - CUT TO CENTRIFUGE - Flash tells Blaze to go the other way and suck hell back into hell.

4 - BLAZE GOES THE OTHER WAY.

5 - WIDE EXT. SHOT - The flow is reversed! Hell is sucked into the portal!

PAGE 16

1 - CUT BACK TO STREETS OF VEGAS - WHITEHEART, our formless, featureless, pure, avenging angel, lifts his hand, pointing a finger towards BH, BLACKHEART IS DISAPPEARING AS IF ERODED BY ACID, erasing him from reality. Hell has disappeared, Vegas is back to normal.

BLACKHEART
Begging for his life.

2 - NARROW PAGE WIDE HORIZONTAL - A FLASH OF BRILLIANT WHITE LIGHT BATHES EVERYTHING.

3 - CUT TO - BLAZE CARRIES X-23 AND FLASH ON HIS BIKE, they rocket away from the centrifuge as the CENTRIFUGE AND CONTRACTION SITE DETONATES UP IN A GIANT EXPLOSION. Power chord! Yes! America!

SFX
GRAKHOOOOM

4 - CUT TO - VEGAS - HULK OF VENGEANCE STANDS IN THE MIDDLE OF THE STREET, CONFUSED PEDESTRIANS ABOUND. Blackheart is gone.

ALEJANDRA (OP)
You've stolen what is mine.

5 - HULK TURNS TO SEE ALEJANDRA STOMPING TOWARDS HIM.

ALEJANDRA
You've had your fun. Now return the Spirit of Vengeance to its rightful vessel.

PAGE 17

1 - SOV leaves Hulk and rockets into Alejandra.

SOV
SHE IS MY HOST.

2 - ALEJANDRA BECOMES THE GHOST RIDER.

3 - GHOST RIDER KNOCKS ASIDE HULK AND ROCKETS AWAY DOWN THE STRIP.

4 - Hulk/Venom turns around as the rest of cast arrive with Blaze on his bike.

BLAZE
Did she take the spirit of Vengeance? Is she gone?!

HULK
YeEsS.

5 - SYMBIOTE LEAVES HULK, slithers across the ground SLITHERS UP FLASH.

6 - FLASH IS ONCE AGAIN AGENT VENOM.

CAPTAIN AMERICA (OP)
There he is... [all temp]

PAGE 18

1 - POWER CHORD MONEY HERO SHOT - Our heroes turn around to see SON OF SATAN, DR. STRANGE, CAPTAIN AMERICA, BEAST and GIANT-MAN walking up towards them.

DR. STRANGE
I can't detect Blackheart. Seems Hell has gone away.

SON OF SATAN
SoS makes a joke about not being able to tell the difference.

2 - The heroes begin to surround Venom, Hulk walking towards them waving his hands "no".

CAPTAIN AMERICA
Cap orders his squad to take down Venom.

HULK
No. You got the kid all wrong, Cap. Hulk tells Cap that Venom saved the day, real hero, willingly gave up the symbiote to help.

3 - Two shot - Venom and Cap.

VENOM
Venom, I saved your life. Saved NY. I've got troubles, super villain type. I need the suit.

VENOM
I took the suit because a villain discovered my identity and was threatening my family, etc.

4 - Cap looking at Venom, contemplating.

5 - McCoy and Pym tell Cap they think they can find a way to turn off the symbiote's influence. A drug built off the one the military has been using but stronger.

6 - The mask melts off, REVEALING FLASH'S FACE. He offers his hand to Cap to shake.

FLASH
I just want to serve my country.

7 - Cap looks at his hand.

PAGE 19

1 - Front on Flash, nervous.

2 - CAP SHAKES HIS HAND.

CAPTAIN AMERICA
Alright then...

FLASH
Thompson. Corporal Eugene Thompson.
Friends call me Flash.

CAPTAIN AMERICA
Okay, Flash. Maybe we can find a way to help you.

CAPTAIN AMERICA
Provided you do one thing.

FLASH
Sir?

3 - CAP POKES A STERN FINGER INTO VENOM'S CHEST; a half smile lets us know he's playing at being mad.

CAPTAIN AMERICA
Return my bike.

4 - PULL BACK TO SON OF SATAN, TROUBLED, looking at our heroes as they talk to Cap and the Avengers. X-23 HAS HER CLAWS OUT, STRANGE IS INVESTIGATING THEM.

DR. STRANGE
With the gargoyles passing the spells affects have gone.

DR. STRANGE
Damon? What is it?

5 - Strange asks why he's so transfixed.

SON OF SATAN

He doesn't say why. Nothing. No reason. Just exhausted...6 - We see from his POV he can see a pentagram on each of our heroes, X-23, HULK, AND VENOM EACH WITH A GLOWING PENTAGRAM on their chests just the same as the one on his.

SON OF SATAN
"...a problem for another day."

PAGE 20

1 - CUT TO - HELL - MEPHISTO TORTURING BH AND GARI.

MEPHISTO
You want me to return you? To give it another try. I was thinking of opening my own casino, less conspicuous obviously. Need someone to run it. Build it up. You and your crew feel up to the task?

2 - BH nods to his father.

BLACKHEART
Yes.

MEPHISTO
How hard it must be. Endlessly seeking the approval of your withholding father. Constantly trying to one up him, constantly coming so close yet still failing, only to beg for another opportunity.

3 - THEY APPEAR IN A CASINO, in their HUMAN FORM AGAIN. Casino is run down, gross, built in the 70s with a "Small World" theme.

MEPHISTO (CAP)
"Almost as if you've spent your entire life living in your own personal hell devised by someone who hates you very much. Such cruel, unending, monotony?"

MEPHISTO (CAP)
"What type of Father would do such a thing to his own son?"

4 - Hunched janitor stumbles over pulling a bucket with a few mops.

JANITOR
You the new guys?

GARI OYLE
Yeah, guess so.

5 - Janitor hands him and Gari each a mop.

JANITOR
Well, c'mon, you pukes.

JANITOR
We got a dozen overflowing toilets over at Jose Ria's Discount Enchilada Buffet.

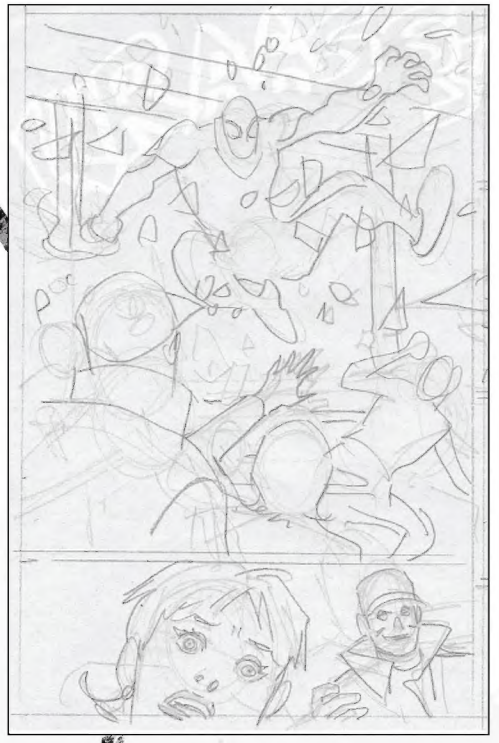
6 - END ON MEPHISTO SMILING, watching 20.5 on a pool of water in a caldron that sits on its side defying gravity. He wins. He always wins.

MEPHISTO
How long will it take the Prince Of Hell and his dolt bride to climb the ladder this time?

MEPHISTO
Is there any worse torment than climbing the ladder for eternity [temp, all temp]

END

#18, PAGE 5
ART PROCESS
by Lan Medina & Nelson Decastro



#18, PAGE 6
ART PROCESS
by Lan Medina & Nelson Decastro

#18, PAGE 7
ART PROCESS
by Lan Medina & Nelson Decastro

#18, PAGE 8
ART PROCESS
by Lan Medina & Nelson Decastro

CIRCLE OF FOUR!

When a portal to the underworld opens in the middle of Las Vegas, Venom must join Red Hulk, Ghost Rider and X-23 on a crusade to stop the spread of Hell on Earth. Can these tarnished heroes wrestle free of their own personal demons and band together to save the world in its darkest hour? Then, Venom faces a gauntlet of doom as Crime-Master unites Jack O'Lantern, the Human Fly, Toxin and more to destroy him! Crime-Master's diabolical plan brings war to Flash Thompson's family and friends — and in this war, there will be victims! Meanwhile, Venom joins the Secret Avengers, but what's left of Flash to join the team? Even with the symbiote under control, Flash's dark secrets put everything at risk — especially when the original Venom host, Eddie Brock, comes calling!

Collecting *Venom (2011) #13, #13.1-13.4* and *#14-22* — written by Rick Remender, Rob Williams, Jeff Parker and Cullen Bunn; and illustrated by Tony Moore, Lee Garbett, Sana Takeda, Julian Totino Tedesco, Lan Medina, Kev Walker and Declan Shalvey.

T+ MARVEL